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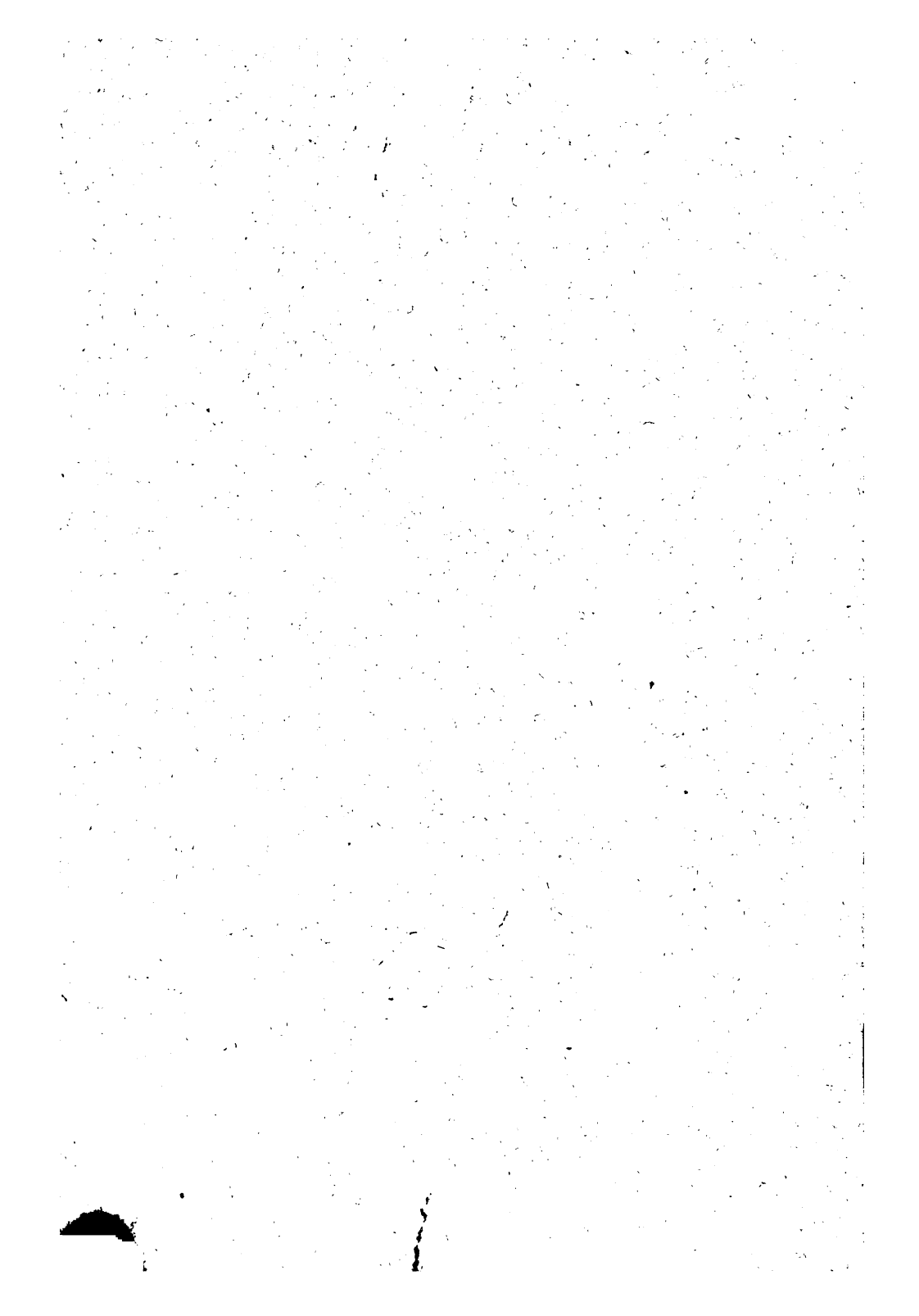
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PERSONAL COMPETITION

**Its Place in the Social Order and Effect upon Individuals;
with some Considerations on Success.**

BY

CHARLES H. COOLEY, Ph.D.

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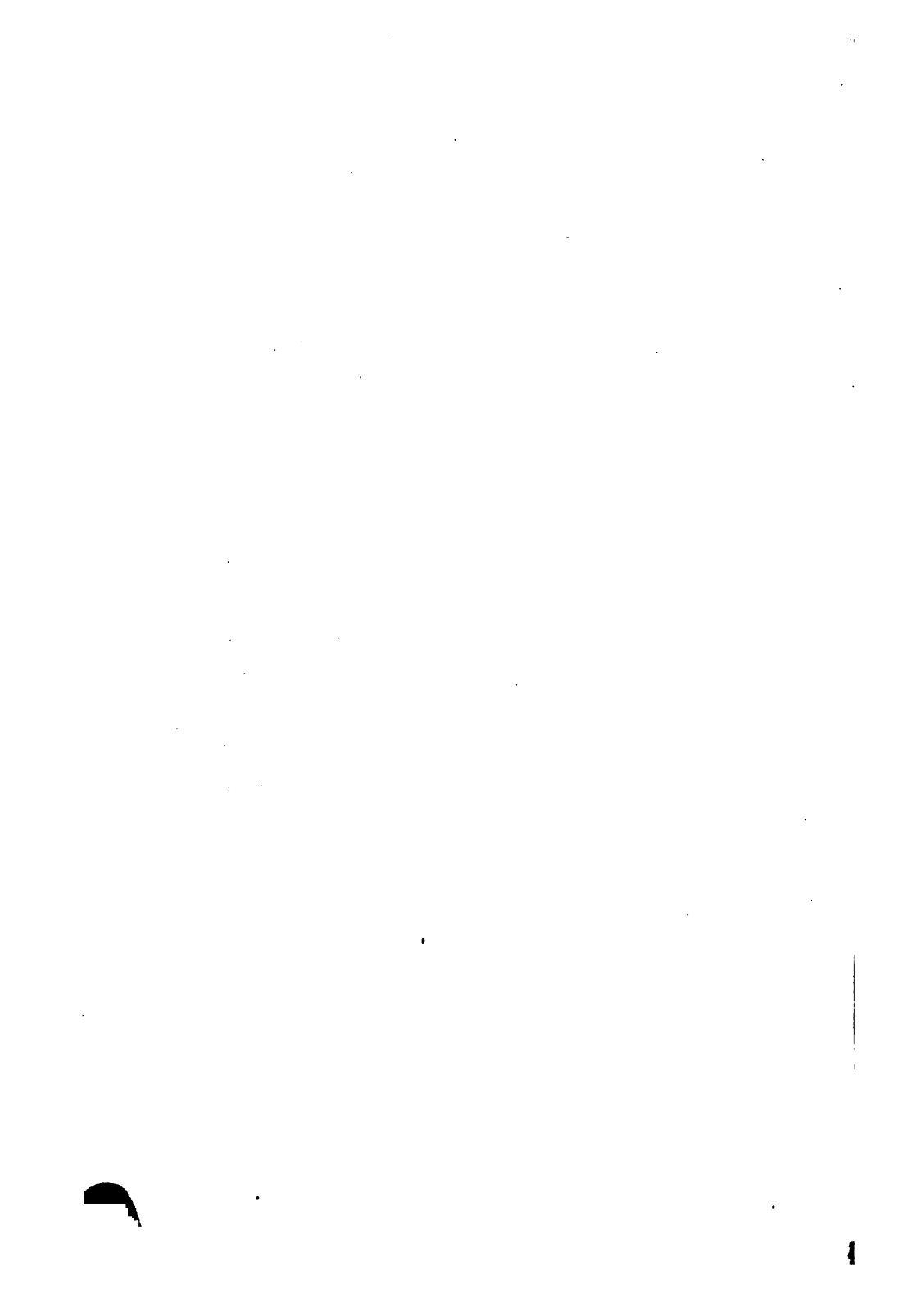
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PERSONAL COMPETITION.

Its Place in the Social Order and Effect upon Individuals; with some Considerations on Success.

PERSONAL COMPETITION.

I propose to discuss Personal Competition with no special reference to industry or commerce, but rather with a view to the part that it plays in social life as a whole, and to the effect it has upon the character and happiness of men. With this purpose I shall consider its function, its intensity, its relation to association, the conditions of personal success, the bearing of success upon morality, the effect of competition as regards sympathy, contentment and individuality ; and finally, the standard of success. Of course the discussion of these subjects is very far indeed from exhaustive: my aim is to give a concise and connected view of principles and to suggest, at least, their application to existing social conditions.

Some of the matters treated are of a sort concerning which many people feel strongly, upholding conflicting views with a common vehemence. I cannot expect to reconcile these differences, which rest as much upon temperament and point of view as upon intellectual grounds; but I hope that discerning readers will find in what I say evidence of a painstaking desire to see the truth and to state it fairly.

I.

THE FUNCTION OF PERSONAL COMPETITION.

The function of personal competition, considered as a part of the social system, is to assign to each individual his place in that system. If "all the world's a stage," this is a process that distributes the parts among the players. It may do it well or ill, but, after some fashion, it does it. Some may be cast in parts unsuited to them; good actors may be discharged altogether and worse ones retained; but nevertheless the thing is arranged in some way and the play goes on.

That such a process must exist can hardly, it seems to me, admit of question: in fact I believe that those who speak of doing away with competition use the word in another sense than is here intended. Within the course of the longest human life there is necessarily a complete renewal of the persons whose communication and coöperation make up the life of society. The new members come into the world without any legible sign to indicate what they are fit for, a mystery to others from the first and to themselves as soon as they are capable of reflection: the young man does not know for what he is adapted, and no one else can tell him. The only possible way to get light upon the matter is to adopt the method of experiment. By trying one thing and another and by reflecting upon his experience, he begins to find out about himself, and the world begins

to find out about him. His field of investigation is of course restricted, and his own judgment and that of others liable to error, but the tendency of it all can hardly be other than to guide his choice to that one of the available careers in which he is best adapted to hold his own. I may say this much, perhaps, without assuming anything regarding the efficiency or justice of competition as a distributor of social functions, a matter regarding which I shall offer some suggestions later. All I wish to say here is that the necessity of some selective process is inherent in the conditions of social life.

It will be apparent that, in the sense in which I use the term, competition is not necessarily a hostile contention, nor even something of which the competing individual is always conscious. From our infancy onward throughout life judgments are daily forming regarding us of which we are unaware, but which go to determine our careers. "The world is full of judgment days." A and B, for instance, are under consideration for some appointment: the experience and personal qualifications of each are duly weighed by those having the appointment to make, and A, we will say, is chosen. Neither of the two need know anything about the matter until the selection is made. It is eligibility to perform some social function that makes a man a competitor, and he may or may not be aware of it, or, if aware of it, he may or may not be consciously opposed to others. I trust that the reader will bear in mind that I always use the word competition in the sense here explained.

There is but one alternative to competition as a means of determining the place of the individual in the social system, and that is some form of *status*, some fixed, mechanical rule, usually a rule of inheritance, which decides the function of the individual without reference to his personal traits, and thus dispenses with any process of comparison.¹ It is possible to conceive of a society² organized entirely upon the basis of the inheritance of functions, and indeed societies exist which may be said to approach this condition. In India, for example, the prevalent idea regarding the social function of the individual is that it is unalterably determined by his parentage, and the village blacksmith, shoemaker, accountant or priest has his place assigned to him by a rule of descent as rigid as that which governs the transmission of one of the crowns of Europe. If all functions were handed down in this way, if there were never any deficiency or surplus of children to take the place of their parents, if there were no progress or decay in the social system, making necessary new activities or dispensing with old ones; then, there would be no use for a selective process. But precisely in the measure that a society departs from this condition, that individual traits are recognized and made available, or social change of

¹The principle of length of service, so widely recognized in making promotions, is an example of a form of *status* unconnected with inheritance.

²As there has been much discussion concerning the meaning of this word it may be well to say that I use it, with conscious vagueness, to mean a totality of social relations. I also use the terms "social order" and "social system" in the same sense.

any sort comes to pass, in that measure must there be competition.

Status is not an active process as competition is ; it is simply a rule of conservation, a makeshift to avoid the inconveniences of continual readjustment in the social structure. Competition or selection is the only constructive principle, and everything worthy the name of organization had at some time or other a competitive origin. At the present day the eldest son of a peer may succeed to a seat in the House of Lords simply by right of birth ; but his ancestor got the seat by competition, by some exercise of personal qualities that made him valued, or loved, or feared, by a king or a minister.

Sir Henry Maine has pointed out that the increase of competition is a characteristic trait of modern life, and that the powerful ancient societies of the old world were for the most part non-competitive in their structure. While this is true, it would be a mistake to draw the inference that *status* is a peculiarly natural or primitive principle of organization and competition a comparatively recent discovery. On the contrary the spontaneous relations among men, as we see in the case of children, and as we may infer from the life of the lower animals, are highly competitive, personal prowess and ascendancy being everything and little regard being paid to descent simply as such. The *régime* of inherited *status*, on the other hand, is a comparatively complex and artificial product, necessarily of later growth, whose very general prevalence among the successful societies of the old world is doubtless to be explained by the

stability and consequently the power which it was calculated to give to the social system. It survived because under certain conditions it was the fittest. It was not and is not universally predominant among savage or barbarous peoples. With the American Indians, for example, the definiteness and authority of *status* were comparatively small, personal prowess and initiative being correspondingly important. The interesting monograph on Omaha Sociology by Dorsey, published by the United States Bureau of Ethnology, contains many facts showing that the life of this people was highly competitive. When the tribe was at war any brave could organize an expedition against the enemy, if he could induce enough others to join him, and this organizer usually assumed the command. In a similar way the managers of the hunt were chosen because of personal skill; and, in general, "Any man can win a name and rank in the state by becoming 'wacuce' or brave, either in war or by the bestowal of gifts and the frequent giving of feasts."

Throughout history there has been a struggle between the principles of *status* and competition regarding the part that each should play in the social system. Generally speaking the advantage of *status* is in its power to give order and continuity. As Gibbon informs us, "The superior prerogative of birth, when it has obtained the sanction of time and popular opinion, is the plainest and least invidious of all distinctions among mankind";¹ and he is doubtless right in ascribing the con-

¹ Decline and Fall, Milman-Smith Edition, I: 305.

fusion of the later Roman Empire largely to the lack of an established rule for the transmission of imperial authority. (The chief danger of *status* is that of suppressing personal development, and so of causing social enfeeblement, rigidity and ultimate decay.) On the other hand competition develops the individual and gives flexibility and animation to the social order; its danger being chiefly that of disintegration in some form or other. The general tendency in modern times has been toward the relative increase of the free or competitive principle, owing to the fact that the rise of other means of securing stability has diminished the need for *status*. The latter persists, however, even in the freest countries, as the method by which wealth is transmitted, and also in social classes, which, so far as they exist at all, are based chiefly upon inherited wealth and the culture and opportunities that go with it. The ultimate reason for this persistence—without very serious opposition—in the face of the obvious inequalities and limitations upon liberty that it perpetuates, is perhaps the fact that no other method of transmission has arisen that has shown itself capable of giving continuity and order to the control of wealth.

II.

THE INTENSITY OF COMPETITION.

By the intensity of competition I mean the relative amount of activity absorbed by the selective process. To make this meaning clearer suppose a country where children ordinarily remain in the same locality as their parents, where their choice of career is practically limited to a small number of trades or, in the case of the upper class, to three or four professions; where, moreover, one who has established himself in a trade or profession is fairly secure against being driven out of it, or of finding it undermined by new methods; there, I should say, the intensity of competition is small, that is to say each man devotes but a small part of his energy to finding his place in the social whole. That question is in great measure settled for him by the conditions just mentioned. On the other hand if neither place nor class confine him, if migration in search of opportunity is common, if the humblest-born may and do aspire to the highest places, and spend a large part of their lives in striving to attain them, if a man even when established in some niche in the social system can maintain it only by vigorous and continued endeavor; there the intensity of competition is great. Again, where things go on in much the same way one generation after another, without the creation of new kinds of activity or the extension of old ones, competition will be less intense than where a rapid creation

of new functions involves selection to determine who shall perform them.

The greater or less efficiency of the selective agents is another important element in the matter. If they work promptly and surely they may do a great deal with a comparatively small expenditure of force, and the intensity of competition will be correspondingly diminished; while if they are inefficient they will, like any other bad machine, use up a great deal of energy without producing a corresponding result.

Accordingly it seems to me that the general relation between social conditions and the intensity of competition may be comprised in the following propositions:

The intensity of competition varies

- 1, with the degree of personal liberty;
- 2, with the rate of social change;
- 3, inversely as the efficiency of the selective agents.

The freer the individual, the wider his field of choice in determining his social function, and the wider the field of choice the more active must the selective process be in assigning him his place in it. Of a child born in British India, it can be predicted with some probability what and where he will be thirty years hence; but a child born in an American village may be anywhere and anything, almost, at the end of that time: no one would venture a guess. In the one case competition has little to do; in the other everything. So with social change; unless it is mere decay, it involves new things to be done, new opportunities. For ex-

ample, the electric industries, now employing hundreds of thousands of men, have arisen within a comparatively short time, and every man in them has found his place by competition. In an analogous manner the opening of new regions, like Oklahoma or the Klondike, the creation of an army, such as took place at the outbreak of the Spanish war, the revelation of new fields of research, such as was made by the publication of the *Origin of Species*, are inevitably the occasion of a selective activity to determine who shall be the settlers, the miners, the military officers, the investigators, that the situation demands.¹

As to selective agencies, an all-wise despot would undoubtedly be the most efficient; and it is conceivable that he might give to men a great deal of personal liberty and provide for any amount of social change without much increase in the intensity of competition. This being out of the question, a society striving to be free and progressive must do the best it can to achieve rational selections through its organization. By just laws, by a public sentiment appreciative of every sort of merit, and, most of all, by a system of education calculated to discover and develop the special capabilities of each individual, it can do much to make its choices prompt, intelligent and just, and to avoid wasteful con-

¹ A local and temporary intensification of competition may result from a diminution of opportunity which forces many individuals to struggle for access to a few openings. This is perhaps what some people would be likely to think of in connection with the phrase 'intense competition'. But the changes which give a general and enduring stimulus to competition are of the opposite sort, are such as increase opportunity.

flict. It is from this point of view that the existing state of things has been most effectively criticised ; and writers who demand that competition be suppressed usually mean that we ought to replace irrational and destructive contention by intelligent selection.

The three propositions that I have suggested indicate the social conditions of more or less intensified competition. To these should be added a condition that is rather biological or psychological, namely the race traits of the people. An aggressive, ambitious, virile people, such as the Anglo-Saxon, German or Irish, is naturally competitive. Each man wants a great deal, and has little dread of migration, hardship, uncertainty, or personal contention, to deter him from seeking it. An Englishman or a German will seize upon all the opportunities in sight and demand more, where an Italian or a Spaniard would perhaps make no use of those that are at hand.

The principles above stated are sufficient to explain the fact, which seems to me unquestionable, that the present time is one when, among all progressive peoples, competition is far more intense than it has ever been in the past. They also explain why it is much more intense in some countries than in others, and in some parts of those countries than in other parts.

The diffusion of personal freedom among the mass of the people is undoubtedly, it seems to me, something that was never achieved on any large scale or for any long period, until within the present century. Such democracies as existed previously were small, of short

duration, and at best gave comparatively little real personal liberty. The fundamental reason for this general failure of free institutions in the past I believe to be the fact that until modern methods of easy and rapid communication came into existence it was impossible to combine freedom with unity, order and control over wide areas. (The unfree individual is controlled by custom, authority, physical necessity and other agencies that do not involve his intelligent choice) the free individual must be controlled by what we call the moral forces, by public opinion, patriotism, rational self-interest and the like.) Now nothing but the newspaper, the telegraph, the railroad and the rest of the modern appliance of communication can enable the moral forces to be so organized as to act quickly and effectively over wide areas. Consequently freedom on a great scale was an impossibility in the past, and the large, stable, powerful states were based on *status* and authority. Personal freedom failed because it was the unfit; it is now succeeding because, under changed conditions, it has become the fit.

This is hardly the place to develop this view of the genesis of personal liberty, though I feel confident that it will recommend itself to the reflective reader. In the meantime it is certain that such liberty has increased rapidly and that it has correspondingly stimulated competition. Of the great nations the United States has undoubtedly partaken most fully of this tendency, Great Britain, next, and Germany, perhaps, next. It is now well understood that the Latin nations, even republican

France, are behind the Teutonic nations in this respect, the chief cause, apparently, being something in the race psychology of the two stocks. We find that in France, notwithstanding her unstable politics, the social life as a whole is quieter, based more on status and less on competition, than in the other countries mentioned. France "presents the spectacle of a tranquil people with agitated legislators."¹

The first principle, then, gives one reason for intense competitive activity in the United States: a consideration of the second will show how greatly this activity is stimulated by social change. The changes that this country is undergoing may be divided into two classes, those that are world-wide, which it shares with other countries that are in the current, and local changes incident to the development of a new country. The former have intensified competition everywhere, the latter give it a peculiar vigor and a special character among us.

The thought of the industrial revolution and of the radical social changes of every sort that have grown out of it is so familiar that I do not care to dwell upon it. Not industry only but family life, social relations, science, education, philosophy and religion are in process of transformation as a result of this movement. In all these fields, though most consciously in industry—because that gives occupation to the vast majority of the people—we have intenser activity, more striving, more success and more failure, a constant breaking-up of settled relations. Great cities, which are incidental pro-

¹ Quoted in Bodley's *France*, I, 57.

ducts of the new *régime*, are in all countries the *foci* of competition, and show most conspicuously its good and evil results. Populated by immigrants, tradition and *status* have little hold upon them, either for good or evil: their industries, their institutions, their social and moral conditions, are new and unregulated.

To all this a new country adds the special series of changes incident to the passage of each part of it through those steps of development, from the rude agriculture of pioneers to the full maturity of manufactures and commerce, which would suffice to produce a restless and competitive condition of things, even if the course of life in older countries were quite uniform and regular. This series is so mingled with the other that it cannot well be studied separately, but its influence appears clearly in the general result. It is chiefly, I think, because they have this additional strain upon them that Americans are thinner, quicker, more nervous and restless than their English kinsmen: it is for this reason, I should say, rather than on account of the difference in climate, that people walk faster upon the streets of Chicago than upon the streets of London: and this helps to explain, also, why, in spite of an unequalled expenditure of ability and energy, so much remains undone in the United States that other nations have achieved.

And moreover the disintegration that accompanies all these changes affects the selective process itself, and tends in some measure to exaggerate the intensity of competition and lower its character by making it wasteful, unjust, brutal, anarchical. The just laws, the

effective moral sentiment adapted to the various conditions of human activity, the adequate educational institutions, which ought to preside over and assist competition, being things of slow growth, are largely wanting just when they are most needed; and we have as a result the disorganization which is so often portrayed, not without some extravagance, by the advocates of radical reconstruction.

Whether this great intensity of competition is on the whole a good or a bad thing cannot be determined satisfactorily until the period is past and we can see what comes of it; perhaps not then. The matter will frequently come up in the further course of this essay. In general it may be said here that the present *régime* certainly does great things for those individuals whom nature and training have fitted to thrive in it, developing energy, self-reliance, strength of character, and power and efficiency of many sorts; but bears with blind severity upon the weak, the misplaced and the unprepared, among whom are many who in circumstances more fortunate would take an honorable and important part in the general life. The moral and social forces that should prepare and support men share in the general disturbance and disintegration; character as well as ability is mercilessly and unfairly tried, and the access of strength to those that stand the test is more or less offset by the demoralization and degeneration of those who do not. Whole classes of the population, institutions, nations, modes of thought, may suffer retrogression. Thus it may not be true, as some believe, that the Negro

race has deteriorated under the moral strain of emancipation, but there is nothing absurd in the hypothesis. Or we may plausibly ascribe the pessimism and sensualism of French literature to a decay of religious faith which has not been made good by the adequate growth of other elevating influences. Local retrogression undoubtedly exists all about us. There is strong evidence that certain portions of our immigrant population suffer moral deterioration, perhaps temporary, under the influence of American life. Corrupt conditions of business are common enough, though not so general as many suppose, and are found principally in new industries, new forms of association and, in general, where business morality has not had sufficient opportunity to develop. Political corruption, which flourishes most in great cities and among immigrant populations, may be looked upon as coming in part under the same general law. To discuss these questions fully would take us too far; it will be easily understood that a thorough examination of the effects of intense competition would bring within our range all the pressing social problems of our time.

Meanwhile it is well not to forget that even in the United States this restless activity is by no means general, but is confined to the frontiers of social change. The majority of the people live in rural communities and, though more wideawake and changeful than rural populations elsewhere, are not in danger of demoralization by excessive mental strain. While very intense competition is a characteristic of the time and place—

that is, there is more of it here and now than elsewhere or ever before—it is far from being universal.

We must also bear in mind in this connection that any diminution of the intensity of competition is inevitably accompanied by an advance in the alternative principle of *status*. In our eastern states, as conditions become more settled, social classes are correspondingly delimited. The family line, always the most tenacious strand in the social fabric, renews its continuity and its hold upon tradition, fellow-feeling, and other parts of the social structure; inherited wealth and position create differences in education, manners and associations; and the resulting class sentiment prevents free intermarriage and increases the difficulty of rising from the manual laboring to the professional and commercial class.¹

I do not mean to imply that we have here merely a see-saw between alternative evils. It is possible to combine, in a considerable degree, the advantages of competition with those of stability, to keep opportunity open after tranquillity is assured. For example, a system of free technical education which should bring home to every boy in the land the opportunity to secure the best training in any career for which his natural capacity fits him, would promote competition of the best kind without producing any serious ill to offset the good. The question of good or ill is quite a different one from the question of *status* or competition: either of these principles may work very well or very badly. We must try

¹ See A. F. Sanborn, A Massachusetts Shoe Town, *Atlantic Monthly*, August, 1897.

to combine the better forms of each in such a way as to produce the best general result.

Nevertheless it would certainly indicate a lack of insight if a person who deprecated intense competition of all kinds as a great evil should also attack such strongholds of *status* as the inheritance of property and class sentiment; since any demolition of these portions of the social structure must inevitably be compensated by increased competition of some kind or other. There are no other organizing principles in society beside these, and what one does not do the other must. If, wealth, for example, were not inherited, the death of a rich man would call for some sort of a selective process to determine what person or persons should control his estate; just as the substitution of a president chosen by the people for a hereditary monarch involves increased competition in the form of elections.

III.

THE RELATION OF COMPETITION TO ASSOCIATION.

Where there is a common interest it is rational to pursue it through united action. There is at present no necessity to combat the error, ascribed to the classical school of English economists, that competition is the natural state of man and combination something irregular and unnatural. The tendency is perhaps rather toward the opposite error, namely, that of assuming that competition is the irregular and unnatural thing and combination alone normal. The two, of course, are supplementary and each has its proper sphere. One is achievement, the other process. Competition is an organizing force, and its relation to association is—as Hamerton said of the relation of truth to beauty in art—one of inferior rank but prior necessity.

The usual way of thinking and writing about these two appears to flow from an idea of separateness and inconsistency between them that does not correspond with the facts. Though perfectly distinct as principles they are inextricably interlaced in human life. Every one of us is a competitor in several or many fields, while he is at the same time a member of various co-operating groups: and—what seems somewhat surprising—we are likely to compete with the very persons with whom we co-operate. For example, every important branch of trade has a rather elaborate system of

co-operation, including associations, trade-journals, price agreements, and the like; yet it is among those who follow the same trade that competition is most severe. Again, here is a factory full of operatives joined together in a labor union for the furtherance of common interests; yet they inevitably compete among themselves—for reputation as workmen and advancement in grade, for office or influence in the union, and probably in many ways not directly connected with their work. It is the same with any active group. The faculty of a university is an illustration of organized co-operation of the highest type; but there is always competition among its members, for the furtherance of individual views of educational policy, for professional reputation, and the like. As I have pointed out, no active person escapes competition for a day. It goes on often when he is quite unconscious of it: that is, his action is affecting judgments and influences that will ultimately determine, in some measure, his social function and career.

Nor is there anything irrational in this interlacing of the two principles. It is rational to co-operate as regards common interests, and at the same time to compete as regards interests which are divergent or undetermined; and this is what men do.

Co-operation, then, arises when men see that they have a common interest, and have, at the same time, sufficient intelligence and self-control to seek this interest through united action: perceived unity of interest and the faculty of organization are the essential factors in intelligent combination. This power of timely and effective "get-

ting together" is one of the things that chiefly distinguish the abler races of men from the weaker, and would of itself suffice as a test by which to arrange the various nations of the earth in an ascending scale of ability. With good reason we congratulate ourselves that the American people, as a result both of nature and training, possess this faculty in a comparatively high degree, although they are at the same time a notably competitive people. There is nothing inconsistent in this: to compete vigorously and combine promptly is to be expected of men who are at once aggressive, sympathetic and intelligent.

Because it requires intelligence and energy, because it is difficult, intelligent coöperation always lags behind the need for it; and we have the rule that competition, once set up, is likely to persist beyond the point where it ought to be dispensed with.¹ Owing to this fact it is, in our own time, not only intense but quite often excessive: it continues when it might better yield to co-operation. When the selective process has performed its function, when it has answered the question, what is the fittest, as well as it can, it ought to cease and give place to organization. To prolong it beyond this point is wasteful and destructive; the principle involved being the same as that rule of humane warfare which declares that the sacrifice of life ought not to continue when the result ceases to be doubtful. The failure to cease is an evil characteristic of a time like the present when the

¹ In this connection the reader will recall the notable essay by Professor Giddings on "The Persistence of Competition," in the *Political Science Quarterly* for March, 1887.

work of breaking down obstructive organization, the outworn machinery of the past, has been pretty well accomplished, and the time for reorganization has arrived. During the breaking-down period the great need is to introduce the competitive principle; but when this has been achieved, and the building-up period has set in, the great need is to check it. If we look about us we see almost everywhere a condition of disintegration, of working at cross purposes, which gives much color to the views of those who charge the age with "anarchical individualism" and call for repressive control. Trades unions, for instance, are far from performing their proper functions, the lower grades of labor being unorganized, and the unions among the higher frequently unstable and apparently ill-conducted. In almost every branch of trade competing agencies are multiplied beyond what is necessary or economical: there seem to be too many small groceries, drug stores, hardware stores, shoe stores, restaurants and the like; that is, the goods they supply could be furnished cheaper if the same energy were concentrated upon fewer establishments. It is well known that more railroads have been built, in many instances, than there is any need for, and the rate-wars that frequently take place have been shown to be injurious to the public as well as to the stockholders. We hear also that there are too many small churches, too many small colleges; and so on.

This state of things is slowly working its own remedy: the tendency, the current, is clearly toward organization. This is decidedly a time of "getting together," though

the results so far achieved are small compared with what is needed. It is surprising to note the number and variety of conventions that take place in one of our larger cities during the summer months. From the advancement of science to bill-posting, almost every reputable occupation seems to have general interests which require the attendance of delegates at an annual meeting; not to speak of the hundreds of social and benevolent societies. The rise of department stores, the multiplication of private industrial corporations and the formation of trusts are, of course, an outcome of the same tendency. Organization, since it brings power and success, is coming rapidly; and the very process of its coming introduces a new set of problems, *problems of symmetry in growth*. Some forms of organization, like the private corporations just mentioned, outstrip other forms which are required to balance or control them—legislation, for instance, administrative machinery, economic science, trades-unions—and we have an overweening growth of power, which gives rise to much wrong, much protest and to extravagant projects of reform. In this lack of symmetry, this narrowing of contemporary development into a few channels while others are almost dried up, is to be found the cause of many if not most of the evils characteristic of our time.

I am as far from sharing the apprehensions of those who see a "coming slavery" in the growth of organization as I am from joining in the indiscriminate condemnation of competition. No fear need be entertained

of the disappearance of competition : it is quite as firmly rooted as association. The two will continue to subsist side by side while varying indefinitely in form and character. Those who cry "Look out for slavery!" as well as those who cry "Look out for anarchy!" are seeing ghosts which will hardly materialize. The future will have its urgent problems, of which the problem of the regulation of great associations will certainly be one, but there is no reason to despair of accomplishing this regulation, and much reason to hope that, if properly regulated, the development of rational organization will increase and not diminish the freedom of the individual.

The proposition that competition is an organizing force or process appears, at first sight, to be opposed to the views of some very distinguished writers from whom I should be sorry to find myself at variance; but I think this apparent opposition is more a matter of difference in the use of terms than anything else. The word competition is used by them as equivalent to what I should call bad competition; and their projects of dispensing with competition are such as I should describe as projects for displacing a lower form by a higher. Professor Lester F. Ward, by a very striking comparison, has vividly illustrated the principle that the mere blind struggle for existence, the natural selection of the animal or vegetable worlds, is suited only to the early stages of organic progress, and becomes wasteful and repressive when continued beyond the point where it can be replaced by intelligent selection. He says :

“Once, when herborizing in a rather wild, neglected spot, I collected a little depauperate grass that for a time greatly puzzled me, but which upon analysis proved to be none other than genuine wheat. It had been accidentally sown in this abandoned nook, where it had been obliged to struggle for existence along with the remaining vegetation. There it had grown up and sought to rise into that majesty and beauty that is seen in a field of waving grain. But at every step it had felt the resistance of an environment no longer regulated by intelligence. It missed the fostering care of man, who destroys competition, removes enemies, and creates conditions favorable to the highest development. This is called cultivation, and the difference between my little starveling grass and the wheat of the well-tilled field, is a difference of cultivation only, and not at all of capacity. I look upon existing humanity as I look upon a pristine vegetation. The whole struggling mass is held by the relentless laws of competition in a condition far below its possibilities. Just as what might be grain is mere grass, just as the potential greening is a diminutive crab-apple, so the potential giants of the intellectual world may now be the hewers of wood and the drawers of water.”¹

The remedy Professor Ward shows to be education, in the broadest and truest sense of the word, the surrounding of each individual with that environment most favorable to the development of his faculties.

I sympathize heartily with the views thus eloquently

¹ Broadening the Way to Success ; *The Forum*, December, 1886.

set forth.¹ If the selective process is to be progressive and not retrograde in its tendency it must pass continually to higher and higher levels as society advances; it must become more rational, more economical, more moral, more just, more free. In the present connection, however, it is fair to add—what I imagine Professor Ward would readily admit—that in point of difficulty social selection presents a wide contrast with the case of the wheat,¹ and that existing competition, bad as it is in many respects, has a relative justification, or at least an explanation, in the fact that it is the only organizing agency available. Some of the points of contrast that I have in mind are the following:

I. Social selection must have in view not one simple type of excellence to be preserved and developed, but an enormous number of divergent types, matching the complexity of social functions. Not the wheat only but every species and variety of plant that grows calls for a garden plot of its own, and a special culture. We scarcely dare assert that there are any weeds at all on the social roadside, some authors holding that every child that is born is fitted to take some useful part in the general life. We can transplant and arrange, trying to accommodate each so far as practicable in the matter of soil and climate, but selection, as the wheat is selected, involves the suppression of other species, and that, in view of the complexity of which I speak, we

¹ I have maintained views somewhat similar, as regards fundamental conceptions, in an essay on "Genius, Fame and the Comparison of Races," published in the *Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science*, May, 1897.

scarcely dare attempt. If the problem were to develop large men, or strong men, or blue-eyed men, or mathematicians, or musicians, and we could rank all other types as weeds and mercilessly plow them up, the matter would be quite simple and easy. But because such arbitrary selection of types to be favored would be intolerable, we put up with a somewhat blind and anarchical struggle as the lesser evil. In short, we cannot select rationally because we do not know what we want. We know very well what we wish to get out of a grain of wheat, but in the case of a child we do not know.

2. In the case of man there are no visible external traits or "characters" which can be used as trustworthy guides to selection. Darwin, in the *Origin of Species*, noted the reliance upon such traits as a weakness of all artificial selection; and in the social order this weakness becomes so pronounced as to be absolutely fatal to all schemes for setting an *a priori* valuation upon men. The most plausible principle of *a priori* valuation, that of heredity, which was so generally adopted in the past, is, of course, hopelessly discredited as a basis for social organization. Because of this lack of reliable signs to go by, social selection can never be the simple act of a presiding intelligence, like the selection by man of types of animals or plants, but must be competitive, in so far as that each person must be permitted and assisted to form his own idea of what he is fit for, and to show what he can do by doing it. We want a competition that shall bring a gentle but firm pressure to bear upon all persons, urging *and aiding* them to find something useful

that they are fit to do, and then to do it faithfully. Progress, as Professor Ward so warmly urges, must be along the line of a scientific educational process which shall not so much select for the individual as help him to select for himself ; and the test, to find out by comparison with others whether he has chosen rightly or not, can never, it seems to me, be dispensed with.

3. It is scarcely necessary, perhaps, to add that even if the problem were soluble from a scientific standpoint the practical treatment of it would remain extremely difficult on account of the lack of a single, paramount and intelligent will to play the part of the wise despot who plants the wheat and ploughs up the other grasses. The "sociocracy" which Professor Ward has taught us to look to as the instrument of rational progress, must clearly be somewhat slow in its growth, the ripe achievement of an intelligent, self-controlled and well-organized democracy. In the meantime we must do the best we can.

Another point which ought to be considered in estimating the work which competition, as an organizing process, has to do, is the degree of natural adaptation that may be assumed to exist between the innate capacities of men and the society in which these capacities are to play a part. The optimistic view is that there is a place for every one, and that the only question is how to get every one in his place ; that each man has some special aptitude that only needs opportunity for development to make him both happy and useful. Thus as each one has properly a distinct object of ambition, dif-

ferent from that of every one else, "every man, by his success in the pursuit, does not hinder but helps his competitors." "Every individual has a bias which he must obey, and it is only as he feels and obeys this that he rightly develops and attains his legitimate power in the world."¹ The competitive process is thus conceived in its highest form, as an amicable testing and comparison of powers, with a view to securing the happiness of all, by helping each to find his own peculiar and appropriate work. It is like the preliminary practice of a football team to determine what place shall be assigned to each player : every one, presumably, wishing to have that position in which he can gain most applause by contributing most to the common success. The aims of the individual and of the whole are the same.

There is a great deal of truth and encouragement in this view ; it sets forth in one of its aspects the ideal towards which competition should aspire. We ought to strive for this state of things, and we can approach if not attain it. But the ascertained principles of evolution, as I understand them, will by no means permit us to assume a perfect natural adaptation between men and society. The fact seems to be rather, that the social order, continually changing, makes ever new and more trying demands upon humanity ; that men, from the point of view of social organization, are to be looked upon as a mass of rough material, all of which is more or less imperfect, and some part of which, a part that might be greatly diminished by better husbandry, is un-

¹ Emerson, *Essay on Greatness*.

available. This part must be separated out and the remainder must be planed, sawed and tried here and there until fitted, with a view to getting the most use out of it with the least waste. A ready made fit is quite exceptional. Each of us is fitter for some places than for others, but no one is fit for anything without a course of education and discipline, whose purpose is to produce an adaptation to social existence for which nature, at most, supplies only the undeveloped capacity.

It can hardly be necessary to argue at length that competition, however defective, does the work better than *status*, and that the real question of practical moment is that of increasing its efficiency. In this direction there is everything to be done, and the means, speaking generally, is the development of rational organization in every form, and particularly in the form of special selective agencies, chiefly educational, to supplement and in part to replace the somewhat blind and irrational competition that accompanies rapid change. It is a question of the quality of competition rather than of its quantity. The selective process should begin farther back, in an intelligent and truly free system of education, opening to every child opportunity and incitement to find out and pursue that career for which he is naturally best suited. The principle of *status* now persists in the too mechanical uniformity of education, and in its general failure to supply appropriate special training to the great mass of the people. The rising demand for a greater individualization in schools, for special study of each child with a view to making the most of

him and teaching him how to make the most of himself, for manual-training and trade schools accessible to all, is a demand for a more rational and open competition. In the lack of these things children, who need freedom most, are not free, but bound by the condition of their parents, and by the habits and ideas which they contract from their early associates and surroundings. Freedom is a positive and not a negative thing; it is to be secured not by mere letting alone, which is often abandonment to enslaving social conditions, but by rational social agencies deliberately organized to secure it.

True freedom, healthy organization and the highest type of competition inevitably go together; they are, indeed, various aspects of the same thing. Freedom is possible only through open competition and through an organization that promotes the highest development of each individual: the best organization is not only the outcome of rational freedom and just competition, but is also a means of securing these; in other words the whole social structure and process is an organic whole which can be bettered only by a general advance all along the line.

Our time, as already suggested, is one in which, old social structures having gone to pieces, we are slowly and tentatively building up new ones. In the meantime the social process is at once intensified by the extraordinary call upon it and somewhat confused and demoralized by the failure of the structures which normally control and direct it. Our cities, especially, are full of the disintegrated material of the old order looking for a

place in the new : men without trades, immigrants with alien habits and traditions, country boys and girls who have broken loose from their families and from early ties and beliefs, college graduates ignorant of the intellectual progress of the past fifty years, young theologians whose creeds the world has ceased to believe, and so on. There is no adequate means of dealing with this refractory material. Some of it is quite spoiled, and the moral and educational agencies, the customs, standards, traditions, associations and laws, required to assimilate the rest to the needs of the situation, cannot be created in a moment. In such a state of things competition becomes the immediate occasion of a great sum of misplacement, confusion and suffering for which nothing but the situation as a whole is responsible.

The charge that it is a failure as an organizing process, that it puts the round men in the square holes and *vice versa*, causing dissatisfaction to individuals and detriment to society, will appear true or false according to the point of view from which one regards actual conditions. If one holds that each man is by nature fitted to perform some special function in the social system, that there is always something waiting to be done that he can do better than anybody else, and in doing which he finds his own happiness ; if one blinks the difficulty of finding out just what this special function is, of educating the faculties to perform it, and of making a way through the throng to the place where it is to be performed ; then he will be likely to pass a severe judgment upon the existing order, in which there are many total

failures and innumerable misfits. But if he does justice to the difficulty of the problem, rejects as unsound the theory of perfect natural adaptation of men to functions, and compares competition, even in its present form, with the working of the alternative principle of *status*, he will easily discover much good that we must hold on to, as well as much ill that we must try to cast off.

GROUPS AS COMPETITORS.

There is no clear dividing line between individual and group competition. In a certain sense it may be said that there is no individual competition, since the competing person always draws aid and support of one sort or another from other persons. So far as a man is social, and not merely animal, he is the center, and in a manner the product, of a complex web of relations and influences from which he can in no way be separated, unless by death. By "group", however, is ordinarily intended, in this connection, a definite association with distinct purposes and organization.

One of the chief purposes of the creation of such definite groups is to compete more effectually. They are tools devised by men to further their personal aims, and so far as the aims thus furthered meet with opposition the group becomes a competing agency.

The main differences between a person as a competing unit and an organized group are the greater power and permanence that the latter may have, and its impersonality, the fact that, as is said of corporations, it "has no soul." Its action is not necessarily conditioned by

that psychological unity of the various elements of human nature that exists in a person. In joining to create a social mechanism for the achievement of some special aim, such as exploiting a mine or electing a candidate to public office, a man isolates a certain part of himself, a certain wish or purpose, and sends it off by itself, so to speak, to work independently of the rest of his aims and impulses. Other men do the same, and the result is essentially mechanical, and not human. The man, as a moral whole, is not in it; it is only a faggot of parallel interests. The man extends his reach, but in doing so he loses immediate control of the organ, and with that is likely to go all vivid sense of responsibility. The action of an organization is not necessarily lower, morally, than that of the individual men who create it, but it is likely to be; it is not so accessible to control by sentiment, by public opinion, by pride, vanity, and other peculiarly human influences. As members of a corporation, a legislature or a party, men will share in doing things which they would not do if they were to be held personally responsible for them. It is also true that as members of philanthropical and ~~and~~ educational organizations men frequently build better than they know, better than they seriously or continuously intend.

The fact that definite associations are more numerous and more specialized than they have been in the past increases this impersonal tendency. This circumstance, which is connected with the increased facility of association effected by modern communication, brings it

to pass that the modern man shares in many associations, each one of which is narrowly restricted in its aim, and of course feels a personal responsibility for each in inverse ratio to their number. The broader association of the past, for instance the mediæval trade-guild, embracing almost the whole social, aesthetic and religious life of the individual, must have been a more *human* thing than the modern corporation or trades-union.

These two attributes of competing organizations, power and impersonality, together with the fact that they are, for the most part, new and unassimilated elements in the social system, entirely justify the expectation that they will require special and somewhat stringent means of control. All forms of power must be controlled and subordinated to the general life and aims; freedom means not the diminution of such subordination and control but the substitution of higher forms for lower, the replacing of tradition, authority and *status* by something that works upon intelligent choice through appeals to feeling or principle. Organized groups being comparatively little amenable to these higher forms of control must be correspondingly subjected to the lower, that is to legal restrictions: being impersonal they cannot share fully in the growth of personal freedom.

An important and substantially new problem is thus introduced into political science by the rapid rise of powerful and highly-specialized private associations. In the past it has been the policy, I believe, of all stable governments to control strictly, if not to repress, organi-

zations formed independently of them. This is still largely the case outside of the United States and Great Britain. There is no freedom of association in Russia; and little in France or Germany compared with what we enjoy. In the United States the legal presumption is, and should be, in favor of the beneficence or harmlessness of all exercise of private initiative until it appears by experience to be harmful. Where harmfulness does appear the question before our jurists and legislators is, just what control is required and how may it best be applied. The matter is greatly complicated by the fact that not only are the forms of association new and hard to manage, but the industries themselves, which the associations carry on, are largely new also, and would require a new body of law simply as industries, even if they were carried on by individuals. Thus, in connection with railways we have two distinct classes of questions, the corporation problem, including what relates to the form of organization, questions common to this and to other great industries, and the railway problem proper, arising from the special nature of this particular industry.

The matter may be summed up by saying that, as before hinted, it is a question of symmetry in development. Urged on by the necessities of the situation, industrial activities, and the social relations arising from them, have far outstripped other activities which, in a symmetrical social order, should balance and control them. This fact is patent everywhere; it is the key to the whole situation. Law, religious belief, art, moral stand-

ards, have been left far behind ; and the great need of the time is that they should catch up with the procession.

Owing to this backwardness of the means of control, group competition, even more than any other sort, is in a state of partial anarchy or border-ruffianism. These gigantic, unmoral creatures are restrained, if at all, rather by the primitive fear of retaliation than anything else. Things are in the fighting stage, which has not yet brought to light the conditions of equilibrium, and given place to that subordination to rule that characterizes an orderly society.

IV.

CONDITIONS OF SUCCESS.

I wish to avoid the utterance of platitudes upon this familiar though always interesting subject, and shall therefore content myself with attempting to indicate in the most general way, the relation between success and the social order. The discussion must be very indefinite owing to the fact that the conditions of success are a function of the particular social organization, so that every field of endeavor, every social group, has in some measure its peculiar requirements. The point is to set forth those requirements that are almost universal, and to show how they are related to the competitive process.

Generally speaking the world requires of a man two classes of faculties, which may be roughly described as the special and the social. The first distinguish him from other men and enable him to perform some more or less peculiar function; the second unite him to other men and enable him to put his more special aptitudes into a wholesome and fruitful relation to the world at large. It is very well if nature and education have made one a master of the technique of carpentry, or banking, or medicine, or law, or any other specialty; but as a rule this will do little for a man if he does not add to it those social and moral qualities which enable him to place and keep himself where his gift is availa-

ble, and to exercise it in such a manner as to make it an effectual working piece of the general mechanism. Special ability is a helpless thing unless it is supplemented by general ability.

These two requirements evidently arise out of the very nature of organization. Just as the special structure of the eye is meaningless and dead without the nervous mechanism that unifies it with the whole ; so, I may almost say, is a man who has special faculties without social faculties. Moreover since these two requirements spring from the same root, the need of organic life, they do or should develop equally. The more highly specialized a social system becomes the greater should be the development of the unifying and co-ordinating activities of every kind : and as regards the individual this means that more and more will be required of him in the way of intelligence, morality, self-reliance, and the like. Under favorable conditions individualization and socialization proceed *pari passu* ; and I recommend this suggestion to the consideration of those who believe that the increasing specialization which marks our time necessarily involves the narrowing and dwarfing of personality. On the contrary it calls for a larger, richer personality ; and that is what must in the end prevail.

In order to make my meaning clearer let me dwell for a few moments upon certain familiar and generally-valued elements of personality—such as self-control, enterprise, perseverance, address, and “common-sense”—with the purpose of showing that they are very much in demand in a competitive society, and that the call upon

them increases as such a society becomes freer and more complex.

In every social career a prime demand is steadiness: it matters little what the task is, the incumbent must be faithful to it, he must be one upon whom the world can depend to be at his post doing work of standard quality. To illustrate this in detail and to show that unreliability spells failure would be superfluous. The demand for this trait is steadily upon the increase; since the greater the complexity and interdependence of the social order the greater the need of soundness in all parts of its structure. The unreliable man is a public nuisance; and the wider the relations in which he is involved the more intolerable he becomes: there is really no use for him, and he inevitably falls into the class of those who can expect only casual employment. The moral quality underlying steadiness is of course self-control, the power to subordinate passing impulses to a rational rule and purpose; the lack of this is social degeneracy, and is perhaps the most common cause of failure.

Enterprise may be described as a disposition to make experiments upon life, and perseverance as a disposition to make those experiments conclusive. From earliest infancy, as any observer of children may see, the method by which we advance in knowledge and power is what Professor Baldwin calls the try-try-again method, the only one, indeed, by which progress is achieved in any sort of endeavor. In social life this becomes enterprise, aggressiveness, a habit of making intelligent plans and of actively attempting to carry them out. In a com-

petitive society every one must undertake and execute a voyage of discovery whose object is to find out his own proper relation to the world ; and if he is to accomplish anything much above the common he may need as much courage as Columbus. The leaders of men, the successful innovators of every sort, are first of all explorers ; and in this regard the requisities for success are much the same in science, in literature, in war, business and politics, as they are in navigation. It took the same sort of qualities, in part, for Darwin to spend twenty years in thinking out and demonstrating the origin of species by selection, as it did for Columbus to carry through his project for a westward voyage to the Indies, or Napoleon to plan and execute his schemes of European conquest. And something of this is required for success of any sort where opportunity is open. The wider the field of opportunity, the more necessary it becomes to explore it, the greater the need for that self-knowledge and self-reliance that can only come by bold experimentation. Accordingly the standard of courage and enterprise up to which men must come if they are to hold their own increases with the growth of liberty.

Perseverance, as I just suggested, is required to make this experimentation thorough. In the prosecution of all endeavors there are times of doubt and discouragement, dead-centers at which the propelling forces cease to act. At such times the whole matter of success or failure usually hangs upon the question whether the person has formed that *habit of keeping-on* that constitutes perseverance and gives momentum to his under-

takings, or whether, on the contrary, he is a victim to the fatal *habit of leaving-off*, which will condemn the most exceptional talents to futility. And the need for thoroughness undoubtedly increases with the advance of civilization: "the fields for long-ranged, cumulative efforts, are wider, more numerous and far more needy"¹ at the present time than they have ever been in the past.

Address or *savoir-faire* appears to be based upon a sympathetic insight into human nature, guided by intelligence and steadied by a natural coolness or phlegm. It is also closely connected with the qualities mentioned above, since it is developed or educated only by practical endeavor to further one's purposes in the world. It is social facility in the largest sense, skill and efficiency in dealing with the infinitely variegated forces of the social environment. It is a faculty that is necessary to every one in the early part of his career, or at times of change, in order to make his way through the social medium to the place where he can bring his special abilities into play. The young mechanic looking for work, the medical graduate seeking to start himself in practice, the business man trying to re-establish himself after some unforeseen change has driven him from one branch of trade, the artisan thrown out of employment by the closing down of a factory—each needs, first of all, some tact and force in dealing with men which shall enable him to face the world and induce its occupants to make room for him. And in most careers, especially in those which are looked

¹ Stanley Hall in *The Pedagogical Seminary*, II, 74.

upon as the higher ones, those which involve power and leadership, the necessity for these qualities is perennial. Their importance is seen in the fact that those who possess them are often remarkably successful even if their other faculties are quite commonplace. No matter what the original sources of power and wealth may be, the man of address will know how to tap them. The inventor of the machine often remains in his original poverty, while the able promoter reaps the reward of his success.

I would not, however, push this last suggestion too far, because I believe that address is normally and usually based upon character and sympathy, and therefore associated with the better qualities of human nature rather than the worse. It is something very different from mere cunning, which is seldom or never accompanied by that breadth of view and insight into the higher as well as the lower workings of human nature, which go to the making of what we call "a man of calibre." Generally speaking, the successful man must have a good measure of our common humanity, because without that he cannot know men or gain their confidence. Antonio will make a better president of a railroad company than Shylock. At the same time, perhaps just because he has this common humanity, the man of address is not likely to rise much above the general level in point of morality. He is usually a conformer, a

"Mortal mixed of middle clay."

The need of address evidently increases with the in-

crease of liberty and the general enlargement of life. There is a growing demand for competent men to act as organizers, and at the same time a greater call upon men in general for social facility. The more progressive a society is, and the more sorts of progress are going on at the same time, the more it needs leaders, men who know how to guide the forces, how to distribute them in the most effective order, and to assign to every one the duty that he can best perform. There were never so great and varied opportunities for this sort of ability as at the present time, whose most urgent need is the organization of its abundant energy. And one of the first requisites in such a leader is that faculty of promptly estimating men which enables its possessor to put them where they will be most useful.

“Jedwedem zieht er seine Kraft hervor,
Die eigenthümliche, und zieht sie gross.
Lässt jeden ganz das bleiben was er ist;
Er wacht nur drüber, dass er's immer sei
Am rechten Ort; so weiss er aller Menschen
Vermögen zu dem seinigen zu machen.”¹

Every successful mechanic, in a free society, becomes more or less a man of the world: he knows the minds of many men, learns to make his way among strangers, and to fall upon his feet when he is thrown off them by one of the frequent displacements incident to social change. His standard of manners may be, in some trifles, different from what prevails in a richer class;

¹ Schiller, *Wallenstein's Lager*, I, 4.

but in the essentials of bearing, address, knowledge of men, self-respect, he is often a true man of the world, and his *savoir-faire* does not differ fundamentally from that of the statesman.

I shall not dwell at length upon common-sense, so much, yet not excessively, eulogized. We seem to understand by it a symmetrical and humanized intelligence, not necessarily quick, acute or original, but broad enough to contain a true reflection of life as we find it. It is rather a just equilibrium of primary faculties than any special trait; and as such is the foundation of sane and effective action in every situation.

Of course I do not offer these observations as an adequate enumeration and exposition of the conditions of success; but I trust that what I have said will be sufficient to suggest the main tendencies. Each social group, as I have already remarked, has in some measure its own peculiar conditions of success, perhaps making great demands upon some qualities and scarcely any upon others. Yet there is, after all, a sort of type of the successful man, that is, an assemblage of qualities all of which are important to almost any sort of success. It will be apparent that while I have said nothing about goodness, which is a word of no accepted meaning, I do hold that this type is distinctly human and, in a general way, moral; that is, the qualities called for are, as a whole, progressive rather than retrogressive. I know, however, that this conclusion is apparently inconsistent with some facts of observation, and that many seem inclined to an opposite opinion. In order to show more

clearly the trend of my views and the manner in which they may be reconciled with the facts alluded to, I propose to take up some of the more common criticisms of the working of competition upon individual character, and consider them with the purpose of analysis and explanation rather than controversy. In this way I shall discuss the morality of competition, its relation to sympathy, and its supposed tendency to inflict insecurity, discontent and strain upon mankind.

V.

SUCCESS AND MORALITY.

If it were true, as some persons seem to believe, that immorality is on the whole more favorable to success than morality, the outlook for the future would be dark indeed; for it seems to me that practices which tend, on the whole and in the long run, to produce success, to achieve the ends of endeavor, must inevitably be adopted. And if these practices, instead of being difficult, like self-denial, faith in the unseen and perseverance in the face of discouragements, were such as our lower nature is naturally prone to, like violence and deceit, their spread would be rapid and ruinous. It would be easy to show this by the example of communities where, by bad customs or laws, a premium has been put upon immorality; as was the case with some of the provisions of the old English Poor Law, and is the case with a good deal of present charity. I imagine, however, that this is not necessary. Few will question the fact; and I suppose, therefore, that most will admit, as a general proposition, that morality is stronger than immorality. What appears to be needed is a somewhat detailed analysis to show just how the principle works in actual life, and what is the meaning of the numerous exceptions to it that appear to exist.

The forces that cause success to be associated with morality, or the reverse, may profitably be considered, it seems to me, under two heads: (1) Social Conditions, dealing with the forces of custom, opinion and law that

impose moral or immoral conditions upon the aspirant for success; and (2) Psychical Correlation, dealing with conditions imposed by the fact that the mind of each man is a whole, so that certain qualities and activities of the individual imply others as their necessary correlates.

I. THE MORALITY OF SUCCESS AS AFFECTED BY SOCIAL CONDITIONS.

I shall assume that any one who reads this essay is enough of a sociologist to understand that the moral standards which the individual applies to his own conduct are always the reflection, more or less individualized, of those of his social environment, of the group, or complex of groups of which he forms a part; that, to be specific, a lawyer necessarily accepts, with more or less modification, the moral standards of that great social group the legal profession; and so with the physician, the mechanic, the clergyman, the schoolboy, even the criminal. Every group, in the measure of its organization, controls its members and exacts from them conformity to certain standards of conduct. If they do not conform to these standards the group inflicts failure upon them and casts them out. This control or casting out is accomplished in a great variety of ways—most of which do not imply deliberate purpose—which it would be out of place to discuss in this connection. I would refer those who wish a full exposition to the lucid articles of Professor Ross on Social Control.¹

¹ In the first three volumes of the *American Journal of Sociology*.

In every career, therefore, in which success is pursued, the aspirant finds himself conditioned by certain standards more or less peculiar to the group and different from those of other groups. The army officer cannot hope to rise unless he comes up to standards peculiar to the army: the clergyman finds that a somewhat different set of qualities conduce to success in his profession. At the same time, beside these special conditions, there are more general conditions imposed by public sentiment and by the law upon all men, or at least upon all who share in the normal life of the community. In other words, except in some inconceivable condition of anarchy, success is always conditioned by social forces, both general and special, some of them acting through definite command and penalty, like the law, but most of them of a less definite, though not necessarily less efficacious character, working through social feeling, ambition, the dread of disapproval and the like.

The reason why each group imposes special conditions of success upon its members is, of course, that its interests as a group require that certain standards be maintained, their precise character depending upon the activities which the group performs, so that custom and sentiment, re-enforced often by definite social machinery, very naturally take a form tending to enforce these standards. Consider, again, the legal profession: at the very outset an examination must be undergone which imposes somewhat difficult conditions upon the would-be practitioner. Having met these successfully he wishes to get clients and win cases, and finds that to do

this he must cultivate assiduously certain faculties and acquirements, such as insight into legal principles, power of lucid exposition, mastery of the details of each case, the respect and confidence of other members of his profession and of possible clients. In the pursuit of these ideals others are relatively neglected. Moreover he acquires unconsciously, by constant association with lawyers, the habits of thought and opinion current in the profession, and is largely controlled by these irrespective of any personal interest of his own. Every successful man in this well-organized group gets the legal habit of mind, which includes somewhat special moral standards regarding all that relates to the profession.

And so, in general, every social group, so far as its organization is effective, recognizes and enforces such rules of morality as conduce to the attainment of the ends which, as a group, it seeks.

From this follows a corollary that is very important to sound notions of the relation of success to morality, namely, that the morality inculcated by each specialized group is, as a rule, superior in some respects and inferior in others to the more general standards current in the society as a whole. As regards the virtues particularly important to the prosperity of the special group its standard will be higher than that of the people in general, while other sorts of morality will be correspondingly neglected.

The result of this is that the young man entering upon almost any recognized social career will find his

new surroundings elevating in some respects and demoralizing in others, judged by his previous standards. If he goes into the army he will find required of him a promptness, a regularity, a submission to discipline, which is in most cases extremely good for him : on the other hand he will find little opportunity or encouragement for individual enterprise or intellectual culture, and may fall into certain vices which are less reprobated in armies than in civilian life. Of course the higher, from a moral standpoint, the activities of the group the more moral the conditions of success in it become ; and *vice versa*. In a criminal organization crime is a condition of success ; while on the other hand there are careers in which honesty is unquestionably the best policy. Such is the pursuit of excellence in science, art or literature, where the very basis of all durable success is a thorough-going truth or sincerity of character and endeavor. All the great critics recognize and insist upon this, pointing out that insufficient honesty, a swerving from the truth in the endeavor to produce what other people will think is the truth, characterizes all except the best work.

Again, since every person is involved in several or many social groups and seeks more than one sort of success, each man's mind is the theatre of a conflict of standards : we are continually called upon to choose between different kinds of success, or between a temporary and a durable success in any particular direction. If a writer, for instance, is to have any chance of durable success in literature he must be prepared to forego the

temporary success that he might gain by appealing to transient phases of sentiment. The man of science or the moral reformer cannot complain of failure if he does not become rich, or even if he chances to be burned at the stake—provided, of course, this does not take place until he has published his discoveries or disseminated his doctrines. As a rule success in one line involves more or less failure in others, a higher success is bought by the sacrifice of a lower, a permanent success by despising one that is temporary.

I have so far avoided saying anything about success in commerce or "business" in order that I might state the general principles that I conceive to apply to all careers before entering upon a matter which is a subject of some controversy. I believe, however, that trade offers no exception to these principles. The conditions of success in all regular business are moral in some respects if not in others. One must be systematic, assiduous and painstaking in the prosecution of his enterprises, and must cultivate the good opinion of his fellows. Accordingly the young man who goes into business finds that there is a great deal of wholesome discipline in it, that it requires certain moral qualities in a measure seldom achieved at home or at school. Among these is a certain kind, at least, of honesty. Regularity, precision and trustworthiness in money matters are, I believe, conditions of durable success in almost any legitimate business. These things are required because the interests of the group depend upon them, because trade in general could not be carried on

if tradesmen could not be relied upon to keep their engagements. Of course the law is there to deal with the worst cases, and is essential; but custom and a fear of the ostracism that would follow irregularity are generally sufficient to maintain the standard.

On the other hand it has been justly said that business competition does nothing at all for certain kinds of morality, but on the contrary tends to condemn those who practice them to failure. Professor Henry C. Adams, in his luminous and widely-quoted essay on the Relation of the State to Industrial Action,¹ shows this very clearly, and illustrates it by the example of a shirt-dealer who should attempt to pay higher wages to the girls who sew for him than other dealers do. It is clear that his attempt to practice this kind of morality might force him to quit the business or to continue it at a loss. Trade, as a social group, has not concerned itself with the question of paying living wages to employees, and there is doubt whether it is likely to do so. To solve such questions a new set of influences must be brought to bear, new relations created. The law must do a part, especially in the protection of women and children, and organization among the employees, with group-bargaining—not without the strike and the boycott in the background as a final resort—must do more. This, if I understand him correctly, is substantially what Professor Adams holds. His analysis makes very clear the important fact that morality cannot maintain itself unless organized, that mere good-will, even on the part of a large

¹In the *Publications of the American Economic Association*, Vol. I.

majority of those concerned, is ineffective unless supplemented by coercive machinery to bring up the moral stragglers.¹

If Professor Adams had intended to assert that the action of competition is essentially and generally immoral he could not have said, as he does, that it "is neither malevolent nor beneficent, but will work malevolence or beneficence according to the conditions under which it is permitted to act." Yet some of those who follow him appear to suppose that the competitive process is in itself immoral, at least in trade, and tends generally and necessarily to make men worse. The ground of this opinion seems to be some such reasoning as the following: It is obvious that advantage is frequently to be gained by unscrupulousness. A higher price may be gotten for certain goods, we will say, by falsely asserting them to be of better materials than is really the case. Now competition being close and the margin of profit narrow at the best, those who adopt these dishonest practices will have a decisive advantage over those who refuse to do so, and will drive them out of business. So that competition is a continual bribe to immorality; or to put it in the form of an economic law, competition tends to lower the moral level of business to that of the worst men engaged in it.

The fallacy of this evidently lies in the begging of the real question at issue, in the assumption that immorality, *on the whole*, tends to success. The fact that

¹ See also Professor Patten's *Theory of Social Forces*, 136, and Professor Ross's papers on Social Control.

dishonesty can be shown at times to give a particular advantage is assumed to justify the general assertion that it is more advantageous than honesty ; and the rest follows at once. Honesty is the worst policy, competition is degrading, and the sooner we abolish it the better. Perhaps the best answer to this is to turn the argument around. Trade being based upon credit and upon the regular keeping of engagements by business men, it is obvious that great advantage attends a reputation for business integrity and fidelity. Competition being close and the margin of profit small, this advantage will be quite sufficient to determine success or failure, and the dishonest men must be forced out of business. Or, to put it in the form of an economic law, competition tends to raise the moral level of business to that of the best men engaged in it.

Of course neither form of the argument is worth anything. The fact is that competition simply enforces the conditions, *as a whole*, upon all the competitors. It levels down or levels up, just as may happen.

Those who adopt the pessimistic view usually limit their conclusions to business competition : but there appears to be no sound reason for this limitation. If true in business they must be true of competition generally, and we must be forced to admit that lying, pretence, unscrupulousness, are the conditions of success in every career, since there is none in which particular advantage may not be gained by them. The argument given above is just as applicable to law, medicine, teaching, the ministry, as it is to trade. And the only logical

conclusion of the matter would seem to be that the world in general must be rapidly going to the bad, doomed by an inexorable tendency to sink toward the moral level of the worst men in it.

This, I trust, is a *reductio ad absurdum*, and I see no escape from it, no way of accounting for the general upward tendency which most people now admit, except by the supposition that on the whole, admitting what exceptions you please, right is more successful under actual conditions than wrong. As to trade, it is, I believe, a commonplace of the history of morals, that the idea of honesty, as we conceive it, grew with the growth of commerce and was unknown to our barbarous ancestors. Precise notions regarding *meum* and *tuum*, a feeling of the obligations to keep agreements, the whole elaborate ethics of exchange, that "business morality" and "business honor" whose reality and power no one, I think, who really knows anything of normal commercial life will deny, reflect the necessities of an elaborate economic system and are part of the framework upon which it rests. That system everywhere assumes that the men established in legitimate business are, in general, trustworthy, and if they were not it would fall in a week, with inconceivable ruin. All rests upon personal character. The countries where the persons engaged in trade are not trustworthy, where deceit and cunning are the rule and not the exception, are just those which do not and cannot have any well-organized economic life. A main reason for the commercial backwardness of the Spanish American peoples

lies in the fact that the primitive conception of trade as a contest of cunning and deceit is too prevalent among them. National power in trade, as in war, in everything which requires organization, depends ultimately upon moral conditions. Unstable and dishonest individuals are like crumbling bricks, out of which no substantial structure can be built.

2. THE MORALITY OF SUCCESS AS AFFECTED BY PSYCHICAL CORRELATION.

What I have said so far relates to conditions of success directly imposed upon men by the social organization of which they are a part: the conditions imposed by what I have called psychological correlation come also from the social system, but more indirectly; quality A is developed in men because it is necessary to success, and quality B appears, by correlation, because the nature of the mind is such that it necessarily goes with A.

This matter evidently belongs upon the other side of the psychological border, and I shall offer only a few remarks upon it, aiming rather to point out its importance to such discussions as the present than to formulate any definite principles regarding it.

I believe it to be true that ability of the sort implied when we speak of "a man of calibre," the ability necessary to distinguished success of the kind that most men seek and prize, is more often than not associated with a substantial integrity, and a refinement of sensibility rather above than below the average. This opinion I would base partly upon *a priori* considerations and

partly upon observation. Success of any large kind certainly requires, first, a good mind, an effective machine for arranging and comparing the elements of life, and second, ample and correct materials or premises for this mind to work with. This second requirement involves at least a fair measure of sympathy or social sensibility, because the most important material that men have to work with is mankind—the minds of other men—and nothing but sympathy will give him access to this. Certainly the sympathy will not be of the most conspicuous and demonstrative kind, uncontrolled by thought, nor would it be well if it were, for unregulated sympathy is quite as unsocial a quality as cold intellectualism. Indeed the union of the two qualities I have mentioned is precisely the psychological condition, as I understand the matter, of a sense of justice; and I am fortified in this view by a careful and very profitable study of Professor Baldwin's admirable work upon the Social and Ethical Interpretations of Mental Development, in which this and many related questions are most originally and suggestively treated.

Of course I do not for a moment assert that the successful man is necessarily moral or just; only that there is an intrinsic psychological connection between success and morality, a community of origin, that makes them more likely to be associated than not to be. I may perhaps say that they are like two children of the same parents; no one can predict in any particular case how much or how little they may resemble each other; but he can assert that as a general rule there will

be a great deal in common between them. For a more precise analysis of the matter we must await the further development of social psychology.

It may be objected that a man is not a moral unit, but seems rather to have as many moral selves as he has activities, and applies different standards in each. This is true in part only. Custom and the exigencies of different situations do lead men to vary their standards, but there is always an inner protest against this, in so far as the man is conscious of it, and the clearer and abler his mind the more distinct and disturbing the protest. A good mind strongly tends to bring all the activities of the individual to the same moral level; perhaps I may say up to the level of the highest of them.

It is clear, I think, that in speculating upon the policy of honesty we should ask, not what will be the immediate result of this or that act, but what habits of thought and action must a man form, what sort of a man must he be, to stand in the long run the best chance of success. To this I think there should be but one answer, namely, that the man who endeavors to be honest, according to the standards inculcated in the society of which he is a part, is more likely to attain worldly success, other things equal, than one who does not. It is not so much a matter of causation as of correlation: success and honesty have normally a common root in a sound mind.

The advantages of dishonesty are usually near and obvious; the disadvantages, though overwhelmingly

demonstrated by general experience, are commonly remote and hard to conceive vividly: it takes some faith to believe in them. As Adam Bede says: "It takes something else besides cuteness to make folks see what'll be their interest in the long run. It takes some conscience and belief in right and wrong. I see that pretty clear."

As to the question whether the facts of observation support the view that successful men are not as a rule below the average in a disposition to be just, in sympathy, integrity and other moral qualities, the reader will doubtless form his opinion from his experience. I willingly admit that a long list might easily be prepared of successful characters who were, or were reputed to be, men of the worst character, judged by the ordinary notions of morality. Regarding such a list and the conclusions to be drawn from it there would be much to say; and the matter would prove too large for adequate discussion in the present connection. A great deal might be ascribed to the moral isolation in which men of great aims almost necessarily live and which, putting a peculiar strain upon character, is likely to transform a commonplace weakness or hardness into something quite monstrous. The view which I would suggest, without attempting to demonstrate its correctness, is that, on the whole, the association of notable success with a bad disposition is decidedly the exception and not the rule. I find successful men to present infinite variety, but to be very distinctly human and social, decidedly above rather than below the aver-

age; and I think that this statement will hold in business as well as elsewhere. Those who arrive at a contrary conclusion appear to compare successful persons rather with their ideal of what mankind in general ought to be than with what it is.

It is hard to take seriously the view apparently held by some writers of the Italian school, namely, that there is a class of men of vast intellect in whom the moral nature is totally absent, monstrous creatures whom the anthropologist classes with "born criminals," but who by virtue of their prodigious mental faculty not only keep out of prison but accumulate wealth and power and, aided by their entire freedom from moral scruples, occupy many of the high places in our social system. This seems to me improbable on psychological ground, and I have not in fact met any notably successful man who seemed to belong to this category; though partisan writers, political and economic, sometimes describe distinguished persons as having the traits mentioned. The late Jay Gould was painted in very dark colors during his lifetime, and was perhaps the most conspicuous example of the sort of successful financiers that are looked upon as bad men. But whatever may have been the moral tendency of his financial operations, he appears, from all accounts, to have been as regards personal traits, a quiet, industrious, affectionate and upright man. The worst we can say of such persons as a class is that they do not rise above their environments, they find the game going on and play it according to the accepted rules. Their success may be

of a bad sort, but it appears to be due to qualities which we must, upon the whole, regard as good or progressive, to intellect, energy, insight into human nature, and the like. In all such cases we must discriminate, in theory at least, between badness as an individual trait, an intrinsic something that makes one person do worse than others would with the same opportunities and under the same influences, and the harmfulness of the activities or tendencies in which a perfectly normal individual may be involved. The individual degeneracy that makes a man lower, morally, than his fellows is one thing, and the social degeneracy of nations, historical periods and particular trades, professions or other social groups, is another, though it is often difficult to distinguish between them.

General Grant might be taken as an illustration of what I mean by correlation. He was a great soldier because he had a large, keen, sound intelligence, because he understood men, because he was aggressive, steadfast, self-possessed, a man of character. He was a gentle, courteous, upright man—a good man, surely, as the world goes—not because these qualities are of the first importance upon the battlefield but because they went with the other qualities mentioned which are of the first importance. Generally speaking the great warriors, among whom if anywhere one would look for the anti-social type, appear to have been extremely human. Alexander, Caesar, Charlemagne, Henry of Navarre, Wallenstein, Cromwell, Marlborough, Frederick, Nelson, Wellington, Grant, Moltke and their like were men of all-around,

human ability, not at all monstrous, and the majority of them possessed a natural refinement and sensitiveness far beyond the common. Napoleon is perhaps the only great captain who might be regarded as a moral defective; and it would hardly seem that his brutal and cunning traits were such as to deserve this description. As Mr. Stevenson says, he was not a gentleman; but he could hardly have been loved as he was by his soldiers if he had not been within the pale of normal humanity. Yet I do not deny that men can be named who apparently united considerable military talent with almost insane ferocity. Eccelino was such a man.

Surely no thinking man can doubt that, in general, badness is weakness, and that where it succeeds it usually does so through being associated with something better.

It may be said that this is all very well, but that there is no getting around the fact that in a very large class of cases the bad men succeed and the good do not. This is true; and it will be observed that I have claimed no more than that "honesty is the best policy" is the rule and the contrary the exception. The cases in which dishonesty is, really or apparently, successful, come chiefly, I think, under three heads: first, those in which the success of unscrupulous men is due not to their unscrupulousness, but to uncommon ability associated with it; second, those where the success is partial or temporary, and, third, those in which, owing to a demoralization of the social conditions under which

competition takes place, the dishonest or, more generally, the immoral, really prevail over the honest or moral.

Each of these classes will find ample illustration within the experience of almost every one. Here, to begin with the first, is a local money lender and real estate agent with a reputation for unscrupulousness, a hard man, living meanly, who is supposed to have accumulated a good deal of money. "This," says the pessimist, "is the sort of man that succeeds under a competitive régime." Upon closer scrutiny, however, it appears that this man is an indefatigable worker, clear-headed within the narrow range of his thought, and patient, and that such prosperity as he enjoys may easily be ascribed to these qualities, and to his economy. On the other hand it would seem that his personal traits and reputation must be a great disadvantage to him. He is generally disliked; people will not do business with him if they can easily avoid it, and take extraordinary precautions when they do; it may well be believed that he would be better off, pecuniarily as well as otherwise, if he were morally and socially such as to be liked and respected in the community.

And so on a greater scale. Admitting that Napoleon, for instance, often profited by his unscrupulousness; might he not have been, on the whole, a greater man, even in his own way, if he had added to his transcendent energy, intellectual power and personal ascendancy, something of the magnanimity of Caesar, Charlemagne or Alexander? His aim was glory; but did he not, after

all, partly fail to achieve it, just because there was an ignoble streak in him? The world glorifies power, but it does not glorify deceit, sensuality and meanness; so that there is, perhaps, an admixture of contempt in the way it thinks of Napoleon.

I need not say much of the second class of exceptions, that in which the success achieved is partial or temporary. Here would come most of the successful speculators, of various sorts, who now and then draw public attention by enormous gains but who seldom enjoy lasting prosperity. Their life is akin to that of the gambler and subject to similar vicissitudes. This also would cover the many cases in which a particular advantage reaped from a single unscrupulous transaction is made the basis of a pessimistic conclusion regarding the results of honesty. A man will say "Honesty is not the best policy in my profession: X made false representations and secured the contract: I told the truth and lost it. It is scarcely possible for a man of principle to succeed." This last statement may be true in some instances; but not, I imagine, as a rule. The argument, as I have tried to show, is fallacious and usually is no more than the expression of a natural chagrin at having suffered a palpable loss for the sake of an impalpable benefit. After all the upright men seem to hold their own in business, and many who are very successful are admitted even by their competitors to be men of strict integrity. There is little success without strength, force of character, and this usually goes with truth and self-respect.

Cases of the third class are by far the most important,

because they constitute real and not apparent exceptions. We must admit that honesty is not always the best policy—in the ordinary sense of that word—and that, speaking generally, it does not ‘pay’ to adopt standards above what the group or community of which one is a part can understand and appreciate. I do not say above what is generally practiced, because the moral standards of men are commonly above their practice, and they often reward with their admiration and support conduct which is much better than their own; but one who goes beyond this enters the region of heresy, where he must expect misunderstanding, opposition and failure to achieve the ordinary objects of ambition. He must forego policy and fix his mind upon a different kind of success from that which other men pursue, and look for companionship and appreciation to some select group of the wise and good.

As we saw above, the moral level of competition is simply that of the conditions under which it takes place. Its functions are executive, not originaive, it determines who and what is fit, in the plainest sense of the word; it tries the available pegs in the available holes and uses the ones that go in best. It is thus an expression of the existing social order at the same time that it is the process of readjustment, equilibration, change; at once an outcome of actual conditions and a cause of change in those conditions.

It therefore happens that when competition is suddenly intensified it is likely to be more or less debased; the intensification and debasement both coming from

the disintegration of social structure. An obvious case is that of new communities in the West, where, before the forces of law and order became organized, competition reverted to a brutal type, and no one was fit who did not cultivate skill and promptness in the use of his revolver. Another was offered by the Commune of Paris, when, at the end of a series of rapid and destructive changes, culminating in the surrender of the starved and harassed city to the Germans, the untrained and irresponsible 'proletariat' secured control of it, a number of bloody and cunning miscreants stepped into leadership, and the respectable element of the population was robbed, murdered or terrorized. Raoul Rigault became the fittest and Archbishop Darboy one of the unfit. The same principle is in some measure applicable to new industries, rapidly-growing cities, and novel conditions generally. The corruption of our city politics and the fact that the fittest to succeed in them appear often to be the worst, is ascribable to causes most of which, perhaps, may be brought within this general rule: that is, to the presence of a vast unassimilated foreign element whose vote, not being intelligent, is peculiarly subject to manipulation; to the fact that street-railways and other great urban industries, their rights and duties not being properly determined by law, resort to systematic bribery of public officials; and most of all, to the fact that the general stress and hurry withdraw the energies of the ablest men from all but immediate concerns. So with the demoralization, in many forms, accompanying the rapid expansion of rail-

ways. Where rates are unequal and the lowest is to be obtained only by bribery or intrigue, the policy of honesty becomes very questionable, and men of average morality will presently lower their standard of conduct far enough to admit of intrigue with a freight agent. It would be superfluous to give many examples: any one who reflects upon the matter will find them without number.

And, further, as hinted above, the highest honesty, that which is ruled by standards beyond the comprehension and sympathy of the time and place, is not and never has been or can be good policy, in the sense of conducing to ordinary success. The very essence and merit of it, as of all higher morality, consists in its being ahead of the time, heretical, and so unappreciated and unrewarded. It appeals from the present to the future, to conscience, to an ideal being. In so far as it is justified by the world in the end it sets a new standard, creates a new kind of success. Ordinary success is only going a little farther than others on the road that everybody is following; having therefore little permanent result; but the success of moral leaders of mankind is success at a longer range, involving the sacrifice of the immediate and lower aims, even to the individual life itself. As Lowell says.

“Count me o’er earth’s chosen heroes; they were souls
that stood alone
While the men they agonized for hurled the con-
tumelious stone.”¹

¹ The Present Crisis.

Yet to this I would still add, lest the danger of goodness be overestimated, that for one who impairs his worldly career by transcending the ordinary canons of morality there are at least nine hundred and ninety-nine who injure themselves by falling short of them. And moreover the man who feels the higher aspiration can never be happy in the lower success: so that we may say, if we will, that for him also honesty is the best policy.

✓ VI.

COMPETITION AND SYMPATHY.

A very powerful source of the sentiment against competition and of the belief which many cherish that it cannot be a permanent feature of social life, lies in its connection with personal ill-feeling. It is often said to be in its very nature anti-social, a state of war instead of a state of peace, generating hostile passions instead of sympathy and love. The bloody conflicts of our brute ancestors have been replaced by something less obvious and open but—so we are told—equally bitter and destructive, morally-speaking the same thing, “a disguised and indirect *anthropophagia*,” as an Italian writer puts it.¹

Yet there is no inevitable association between competition and hostility. In great measure the selective process operates without any conscious clash of personal aims, and therefore without generating personal feeling. A young man, for example, starts out in life with the purpose of following a certain profession—let us say the law. The experience of two or three years convinces him and others that he cannot succeed in this, and he makes his way into something else. About half the graduates of our law schools are eliminated in this way, and the same sort of thing takes place in other trades and professions. But the process is gradual and the eliminating forces, as a whole, impersonal; that is to

¹ Ferri, in the *Atlantic Monthly*, August, 1897.

say they are too many, too intangible, to make an impression of wilful personal opposition. Disappointment may ensue but not hatred; except in the case of weak and abnormally sensitive minds whose uncontrolled emotions lead them to ascribe every painful experience to the malignant purpose of others. So with commercial competition: a man's trade gradually increases or declines; but there is seldom any one person who can be fixed upon as the cause. In fact, while admitting the existence of a great deal of competitive bitterness, I believe that most men look upon the social conditions under which they work very much as the farmer looks upon the weather and other natural agents. They may make or mar him, and he thrives or suffers accordingly, but there is no single person to hold responsible.

Moreover, open and declared opposition is not the thing most likely to give rise to hatred and jealousy. Where a conflict takes place under recognized rules and conditions which are observed by both parties, it does not necessarily give rise to bitter feeling, no matter how dangerous and destructive it may be. The feeling entertained toward each other by fair-minded and vigorous opponents was well and magnanimously expressed, it seems to me, in the remarkable address of the Spanish soldiers after the fall of Santiago:

"We fought you with ardor, with all our strength, endeavoring to gain the victory, but without the slightest rancor or hate toward the American nation. We have been vanquished by you (so our generals and chiefs judged in signing the capitulation) but our surrender

and the bloody battle preceding it have left in our souls no place for resentment against the men who fought us nobly and valiantly. *You fought in compliance with the same call of duty as we*, for we all represent the power of our respective states."

The clause italicised contains the essence of the matter. So long as I see in my opponent a man like myself, acting from motives which I recognize as worthy, and acknowledging a like worthiness in me, I cannot feel anger toward him, no matter what he may do to me.

The conditions of the open market, like the conditions of the field of battle, are conceived of as part of the necessary course of things and do not, in fairly reasonable men, generate personal hostility. Bitterness arises when there is, or is believed to be, something unfair, something exceptional, some infraction of the rules resulting in unjust discrimination. In fact, so far as my observation goes, it is among those removed from open and equal competition that hatred and jealousy are most rife. For instance, among the clerical force in public offices or large private businesses, where promotion depends upon the decision of one or a few men, a bad state of feeling is likely to prevail, especially if there is the slightest appearance of favoritism. A trifling slight will engender more animosity than would the most serious injury under freer conditions. The very extreme of self-consuming bitterness comes when one's fate is in the hands of another who is thought of as maliciously or contemptuously unjust. Then, indeed, come the nights of sleepless resentment, of passionate, futile hate.

A healthy, self-reliant tone, a disposition on the part of the mass of men to attribute their fortunes, good or bad, to something in themselves, is more general, I believe, in this country than in Europe, and may be ascribed largely to the comparatively free and open conditions that prevail here.

It may be maintained that competition, when not unjust or destructive, promotes a broader social feeling. The free and open play of energy and purpose is calculated to arouse precisely that knowledge of others, and of the limitations which their life imposes upon ours, out of which a wholesome sympathy and a sense of justice must spring. Competition involves contact and usually necessitates some degree of mutual comprehension. To succeed one must understand opposing forces, and understanding is the beginning of sympathy. Your competitor is one upon whom you must count, a factor in your life; unconsciously your imagination occupies itself with him, trying to make out his purposes and methods, interpreting his thoughts from his words and actions. If he turns out to be a person of your own sort, with desires, attachments, standards, powers, that you can appreciate, you will respect and perhaps admire him, no matter how much he may hinder you. Thus you will see life from a new point of view, and be correspondingly enlarged and delivered from your smaller self. There is no selfishness, no narrowness of social feeling, worse than that which flows from an ignorance of others fostered by a too secluded existence. What reasonable man does not rejoice in that necessity of struggle which,

in our "fierce democracy," permits no class to live apart in sensuous idleness without incurring the danger of being supplanted, which forces upon almost all of us, sooner or later, a working knowledge of mankind? The great majority of our people are somewhat sluggish in imagination and sympathy, needing the spur of opposition, and prone to apathy and self-indulgence when it is withdrawn. One who notices how often men of promise fall into triviality and sensuality in the lack of definite aims, and how prompt a cure is often wrought by some external necessity, may well question whether general competition is not the most efficient antidote yet devised to these forms of social degeneration.

It is true that when a young man whose early years have been fortunate passes from the family circle into the larger world, and comes to know the feelings and practices that prevail in the latter, he feels a measure of degradation in the change, and bitter feelings are often aroused, which usually pass away in time but sometimes do not. It has always been the case that a good family is a social group of higher type than society at large, a place where love, justice, truth and refinement are inculcated. It is necessarily higher, not only because of the mixture of all sorts of people in the world, but because the large, complex and shifting groups that carry on commercial and political life cannot so readily be made social, in the higher sense, as a small, stable and presumably congenial group like the family. The difficulty of organization increases with size, complexity, heterogeneity, so that these large groups are

necessarily held together more by such forces as law and economic necessity and less by personal feeling. The good family is a small Utopia, and from it comes the social ideal of fraternity or brotherly love as the right relation among men. The change, then, is a painful one, so much so to a person of naturally acute sensibility, who has spent his childhood and youth in circumstances favorable to a refined and elevated habit of thought and feeling, that the world is likely to seem a very bad place indeed. Yet it is in most cases a wholesome change; what he loses in tenderness and refinement he gains, if he undergoes the trial well, in breadth and strength. His view is enlarged, and he outgrows that selfishness from ignorance to which every one who leads a protected life is necessarily subject. There is very often to be observed in those who are removed from the more active struggles of the world, most commonly perhaps in women, a type of social feeling which is quick and strong in certain directions, but narrow, confined to persons and situations which a contracted experience has enabled them to understand, and having all the effect of coldness and selfishness as regards what lies beyond. On the other hand, while the man who is in the world becomes more or less of the world, with the fine edge of delicacy a good deal blunted; he usually gains something of the broader view and of the robust sense of justice that goes with it. Extreme refinement has its very great value—to the poet, for example, to the artist, the scholar, the moral teacher, and through them to the world: it is a kind of

leadership—but to swim in the wider current is essential to the doing of most of the world's work.

How much have our great American democrats, men of the type of Lincoln, owed to the fact that they have had to work their way up through *stratum* after *stratum* of a various and everywhere competitive society. What a knowledge of men and mastery of life it gives them! They stand "foursquare to all the winds that blow," dealing with the vast and mysterious forces of the popular mind with the same confidence as the chemist handling his occult substances. There is something magnificent in this, a development of personality larger, in some ways, than is possible within any narrower social polity. And the mention of Lincoln is enough to dispose of the notion that such an experience is necessarily unfavorable to the growth of sympathy and kindliness. Every step of his advancement was won in a competitive struggle; and he was, within just limits, a seeker of his own advantage, frankly purposing to overcome his opponents in politics and elsewhere; yet his kindliness and truth were so great that they are the first things that come to mind in thinking of him.

In short, it is only by trying to impose our ideas and purposes upon the world, that is by competing, that we come to know the world and our own relations to it. Our thoughts might be higher and finer, in some respects, if we withdrew from the turmoil of life and pursued some ideal of cloistered goodness like that inculcated in the *Imitatio Christi*; but if we reject such ideals

and determine to share the life of humanity at any cost, we become competitors.

As regards the feeling under the influence of which competition is carried on, its moral character is not to be determined merely by enquiring whether it is friendly or hostile. Hostility in the presence of evil is more moral than amity. Philanthropists not infrequently evince a righteous and justifiable anger against persons and institutions that they believe to be injurious to human welfare; and all energetic people are subject to hostile feeling regarding what seems to them wilfully wrong. The essential question is that of the aims and tendency of the man, to which his feeling is subsidiary. If his purposes are just, so far as he can see what is just, and if he reserves his anger for that which he finds to be unjust and wrong, then his hostile feeling is right and wholesome, at least from his standpoint; it fulfils the function of social anger in spurring on the conflict against wrong. Of course most of us are subject to angry passions that we know are wrong, and are liable to gross error as to others which we suppose to be justifiable; these are evils which we ought to remedy as far as we can; but not by withdrawing from contention and abandoning those objects we hold to be worthy. There is great need for combativeness and I look upon it, when dominated by a sense of justice, as a social rather than an anti-social quality.

Any motive whatever may be a motive to competition, from the basest fear or rage up to the noblest love, emulation or sense of duty. There is no special class of

feelings or desires that is peculiarly competitive. All alike strive for success as they conceive it. To be a man is to compete. *Vivere militare est.*

I can see only one class of cases where competition, merely as competition and without reference to its particular objects or standards, can justly be held responsible for the genesis of bad feeling. We have seen that the restless activity of our social life, exceeding that of other peoples, the breaking up of established relations, the partial disorganization of moral control and support of every kind, the general racking and jerking, so to speak, that go with social change, put undue strain upon many characters, so that they go down under it. The man loses, or fails to acquire, that mastery of the moral situation, that power to control the passions and subordinate them to rational endeavor, which constitutes strength of character. Among those who suffer this fate are many of more than average refinement and sensibility. Those whose skins are *very* thin do not well endure the excitement and rough handling which befall many in a time like the present. Such find experiences distracting and exhausting which supply only a wholesome stimulus to others.¹ There is quite a large class of persons who are too sensitive, too fine-strung, to

¹ I hold that the social sensibility of successful men, as a class, is much above the average : nevertheless, sensibility not duly controlled is a common source of demoralization and failure. The spread of sail which a vessel carries must bear a proper relation to the force of the wind and the weight of ballast in the hold. The wind is comparable to the social suggestions that impinge upon us, the sails that catch it to sensibility, and the ballast to the regulating and inhibiting functions of the mind.

become indifferent to vicissitude and social friction, and at the same time without the intellectual or moral vigor to overcome or subordinate the resulting passions. Such find no refuge from the excessive and conflicting emotions that rack their minds; they fail to achieve any abiding relation to a world which seems to them a fearful chaos of unrest and pain. As is always the case when moral control is broken down, the lower passions take possession and hurry on the process of degeneration. Among these passions comes an unreasoning and self-destructive animosity toward persons and a pessimistic bitterness as regards the world in general, which prey upon the decaying character very much as intemperance and other vices do. This form of suffering is terrible indeed, and the sufferers being often men of intelligence and power of expression their complaints are sometimes heard in literature.

The more effective utterance, however, the bitter protest which is a very distinct and penetrating note in the literature of the day, comes from a class of refined and sensitive men, of strongly emotional type, who have been near enough to this experience to understand it, to taste its bitterness, without actually going under. I mean, to take names well-known, such writers as Tolstoi, Ibsen, Ruskin, Hardy and Howells, who seem to me to come within the class indicated. It is also plentifully represented among writers upon political economy and socialism. I would not be understood as deprecating this protest: on the contrary there is good ground for it, and when containing something beyond mere accusa-

tion, something hopeful and reconstructive, it is beneficent and a spur to progress. It would be too much to expect such writers to weigh the existing order in a perfectly just balance. They are likely to overlook the favorable side, and especially the important fact that the very stir and flux that proves too much for some, brings awakening, opportunity, wholesome endeavor, to a class infinitely more numerous, the somewhat sluggish multitude, previously sunk in routine, torpor and sensuality.

VII.

RESTLESSNESS, INSECURITY AND STRAIN.

Fifty years ago Bayard Taylor, landing in New York after his first visit to Europe, exclaimed: "What activity! what a restless eagerness, and even keenness of expression on every countenance! I could not have believed that the general cast of the American face was so sharp." The same thought comes to the returning traveler to-day. One who has lived long enough in some unprogressing foreign city to become at all settled cannot fail to notice there, among much that is congenial to his habits of thought, a certain smoothness and repose in life that is grateful to the soul. Every one has his place and, expecting nothing but to remain in it, does not worry himself and others by aggressive self-assertion. In dealing with a servant there is no disquieting clash of democratic theory with undemocratic fact. He does not look upon himself as your equal, and you very readily fall into his way of thinking. The traveler, as a person of leisure and presumptive wealth, finds himself the member of an upper class, an unquestioned aristocrat. For him the rough corners of life seem all filed off. Things are rotten at the core, possibly, but on the surface all is finished, stable and secure; he feels a sense of irresponsibility for the general course of affairs and a disposition to enjoy life and to cultivate the aesthetic feelings. Nor is this state of mind confined to the upper class; the general lack of personal

ambition brings with it a sort of freedom, a moral disengagement of which all partake in some measure. To return from this to strenuous America is in part a painful experience; intensely so to sensitive minds of strong aesthetic instincts, minds naturally alien to the conditions that prevail here. The mental attitude that goes with our intense and somewhat chaotic competition is unquiet, expectant of change, agitated by fear and hope as to the near future, and so at variance with that repose and impersonal breadth of thought which promotes the appreciation of beauty and the finer, larger, more detached activities of the mind.¹

Opportunity seems to bring discontent. Men soon reconcile themselves to any lot that they believe to be inevitable: far from protesting and resisting the more, the more they suffer, they become apathetic when hope dies out and presently lose all power of resistance, all conception of a different state of things. But freedom, democracy, competition, animate every one with the sight of bright possibilities, and thousands seek what only a few can gain. Social classes no longer appear inevitable; and the less the distinctions become the more odious they appear. The growth of prosperity, freedom, opportunity, seems to bring increase of dissatisfaction: the more is achieved the more is wanted, social agitations increase instead of diminishing, and there is no end in sight.

¹ The psychology of American life, in its relation to art, is discussed in a penetrating manner by Paul Bourget. See *Outre Mer*, Eng. Trans., 323.

Then, too, there is the insecurity that is inseparable from intense competition. There seems to be no way to give opportunity to the fit but by permitting them to supplant the unfit; and who can be perfectly sure that he does not belong among the latter? While it seems only reasonable that the young should be insecure in the functions they are attempting to perform—because they may be regarded as undergoing a process of probation—it would appear that, once established, the increasing efficiency resulting from experience should make their maturity practically secure, and enable them to finish their course in tranquillity. The earlier period of life is naturally restless and adaptable, suited to undergo without injury and often with enjoyment the vicissitudes of apprenticeship to life. But later comes a longer period that is more rigid, fit to grow and expand in a given direction but not to take a new one, executive but not formative. That industrious and efficient men in middle life should find themselves undermined by social and industrial changes they could not have foreseen, and be cast loose to begin an untimely and unsuccessful competition with younger men for new careers, is a great and frequent evil incident to a time like this, and one for which there is no adequate remedy. And an evil still greater, perhaps, is the feeling of insecurity, the apprehensions that are never realized, the moral wear and tear upon the finer and more imaginative minds, destroying repose, wasting strength, and often leading to pessimism and mental disease.

Thus the time is plausibly charged with strain, pain-

ful to all, so it is said, breaking down many and multiplying the numbers of those who come to drink, crime, suicide, insanity and every other form of degeneracy. A very large class of persons, including many of the wisest and finest minds of the day, dislike and denounce the time, and pray that it may soon be over. They recognize, if they are clear-headed, that there is much good in it, that great things are doing and greater ones, probably, in preparation; but they say that it is a time of transition, of disorganization, of distraction, hostile to poetry, the fine arts and all the higher manifestations of genius, an unhappy time, in which men are paying the cost of a future they will never see.

This matter seems to be very much like that of social feeling, already discussed. The first condition of a just conception of it is to make a division among men and to recognize that one part is quite differently affected from the other. (Present conditions, like all others, are very well for those who are adapted to them, but bear severely upon those who are not. The distinction most important to make is that between the sensitive, the irritable in the broader sense of the word, and the more phlegmatic; the former being comparatively few in number, but including a large proportion of the men who have marked ability of the finer sort.) (This sensitiveness, though increased by intellectual pursuits and refined living, is by no means confined to the well-to-do class, the greater number of those possessing it being scattered inconspicuously among the mass of the people.) The more phlegmatic sort are an overwhelming majority in all classes.

Now the most general trait of the present time, as regards its action upon individuals, is perhaps the unprecedented intensity and diffusion of social incitement. On every side are suggestions of thought and action, awakening ambition, sympathy, curiosity, envy, apprehension and multiform desire. Life assails us on every quarter and demands an active response. These stimulations are felt with an intensity proportional to the sensitiveness, natural and acquired, of the individual mind. Upon the phlegmatic class the effect, speaking generally, is admirable. The once brutish multitude is penetrated to a considerable depth with thought and aspiration, which dispel apathy and compete with sensuality. In comparison with lethargy there is scarcely any form of ambition, however narrow, hostile and apparently selfish, that is not noble and elevating; since ambition, in its very nature, is social, in that it looks to others for its reward, and involves the subordination of the animal nature to imaginative aims. For this class the sort of discontent that ensues is no evil, but an awakening of the imagination, a stimulus to wholesome and humanizing activity. That few gain what they desire is nothing in comparison with the fact that life is spent in hopeful endeavor. "The soul can be appeased not by a deed, but by a tendency." Instead of this social stir and incitement being generally excessive, it is still far from accomplishing its full work, and the mental state of the people of the United States can be called active only when we contrast it with the past, or with that of other countries. The greater number still live in a

narrow, sleepy way, without definite ambition, without real contact with the intellectual movements of the time, wanting awakening rather than soothing. One need only go into any country neighborhood and exercise his imagination upon the mental state of the persons he sees to feel how grossly exaggerated is much of what is written about the unrest of the American people.

They are certainly of a protestant turn of mind, more ready than any other, perhaps, to demand a betterment of their condition. But does this indicate that they are more unhappy? Not at all. Social agitation may be said to be one of their pleasures, a part of the wholesome activity to which I have referred, an outlet to energies which would be painful if kept in. Our contentment is kinetic, not static. It must surely be a person of perverted sympathies who can imagine that Americans are generally unhappy. A fundamental cheerfulness and optimism appear to observant foreigners to be among their most characteristic traits; and this, I think, is due to the pleasures of action and of hope that are so widely distributed. The very persons whose printed utterances would seem to indicate the most desperate state of mind, will often be found, upon personal contact, to be decidedly cheerful, partaking of the joy of life. Freedom takes the bitterness from revolutionary agitation by permitting to the agitators that self-expression, in speech and endeavor, which is their most urgent need.

This, in my opinion, is the case with the great mass of people: they are on the whole happier and better, more alive and human, for the intensity of competition.

But, as I have intimated, it often proves over-stimulating for the finer and more irritable temperaments. These do not need the spur, and are only agitated and put out by it. They say with Thomas à Kempis "*Tædet valde sic cotidie vivere in lite,*" and "make their only prayer for peace." They wish to love, and find themselves harassed by bitter feelings; they long to enjoy or to create beauty, and find no repose for the one or encouragement for the other. Assuming that what is true for them is true for all, they are likely to adopt extravagant social opinions and write pessimistic literature. What they really need is not less competition, but one that is more discriminating, and broader as regards the careers to which it opens the way. An adequate system of education, as Professor Lester Ward insists, would detect the finer aptitudes in childhood, lead their possessors aside from the ruder struggle for which they are unfit, and provide for their development in a congenial environment. This alone will give to such minds true freedom, a fair chance, just competition. It involves a more symmetrical social organization, providing better for the aesthetic and intellectual needs of human nature, and a competitive process suitable to select and educate the persons fitted to minister to these needs.

VIII.

INDIVIDUALITY, SELF-RELIANCE, EARNESTNESS.

In closing this discussion of the effect of competition upon human character and happiness it is only right to state explicitly the fact—which has been implied all along, and is perhaps too obvious to call for much exposition—that, whatever its evils, it promotes individuality, self-reliance and earnestness.

In so far as a man can and does live upon traditional ideas and feelings, without the necessity of exercising choice or of testing his principles by use, he fails to achieve individual character and self-reliant manhood. It is by permitting this, and so relaxing the tissue of personal character, that the most elaborate social systems of the past have decayed. The man who has made his way in a competitive order has learned to resist suggestions, to select and develop one class of influences and reject others, thus achieving self-knowledge and an effective will. At the same time, as we have seen, he is forced to study other men and to develop a robust type of sympathy. The plainest workman, thrown upon his own resources, becomes something of a diplomatist, a student of character, an experimental observer of social forces. It is the tendency of a competitive society of the better sort to make every man a man of the world. He undergoes at once individualization and socializa-

tion, these two proceeding hand in hand, in a wholesome social life, each enriching the other.¹

Again, it is not the least of the merits of competition that it makes life earnest by giving to men a definite, difficult and urgent problem to solve. The present age is alleged to be material, and so vulgar, with too much to eat and drink and wear and no faith or aspiration. But is it not surprising, on the whole, that this facility of production, this economic abundance, has produced so little frivolty, sensuality and gross self-indulgence? The people of the richest and freest nation in the world are said to be too earnest, too striving; they are exhorted to relax a little, to permit themselves reasonable recreation. How can we account for this idealism, for it is certainly a kind of idealism, in view of the apparent fact that the spiritual forces have seldom been so ill-organized as now, and the material forces never so well? How is it that the Saxon of to-day, with infinitely greater command over food and drink, is less of a sensualist than his ancestor was? Is it not partly that while the material inheritance is great, a share in it can only be obtained, as a rule, by a success more dependent upon moral and intellectual power than success ever was in the past, by the habitual exercise of self-control, foresight, patience, by the acquirement of character? The

¹ This is well illustrated, it seems to me, by the contrast between German and American students of the same age. German life, though perhaps more competitive, more encouraging to personal initiative and self-reliance, than that of any other country of continental Europe, is much less so than life in the United States. And the German student is more childlike, simple, impulsive, appears less practiced in self-reliance and self-control, than the American student.

present *régime* usually gives a man material goods only upon condition that he becomes something of an idealist, allows him plenty only when he is proved capable of abstinence; and he often learns his lesson so well that he comes to care even less than is right for the pleasures of sense, and to turn from them when they are within his reach.

IX.

THE STANDARD OF SUCCESS.

Success, as I use the word, is whatever men think it is; that is to say it is nothing other than the achievement, or the hopeful pursuit, of the object of endeavor. Now the object of endeavor which each person sets before himself is, like all the products of our minds, at once individual and social in its origin. It represents the ideas concerning success offered by the social environment organized according to the structure of the individual mind. What I think worth doing must always be a function, more or less involved, of what other people think, or have thought, worth doing. It is therefore no denial of individuality to say that the object of endeavor reflects the sentiment of the social group, and that there is for every group, for every nation and every age, a standard of success more or less peculiar and characteristic. So far as life is determined by the animal necessities, to exist and propagate is success; but beyond this point, when this primary object is secured and a surplus of energy remains, success begins to take on a social or moral character and the object striven for becomes more and more the production of some effect upon the minds of others, the achievement of respect, honor, power, love, or beneficence. These are clearly the chief objects of endeavor in existing society, under normal conditions. The literal "struggle for existence" comes into painful prominence at times, but on the whole it plays only a

small part. What this expression really means in most cases is the struggle to maintain what is called a standard of living; and this is altogether a social or psychological phenomenon. Our standard of living is fixed by what others think, by what those whose respect we wish to retain regard as decent and necessary. It is one thing while a man is at home, and quite a different thing when he is upon a hunting trip. It is determined by his habit of thought and his social environment. The more aggressive forms of ambition, which engage those who are not content with merely maintaining a standard of living, have also this social and imaginative character. The objects sought are power, reputation, beneficence; always the production of some desired effect upon the minds of other persons.

Wealth as an object of ambition and a measure of success, owes its ascendancy to its social implications, and the pursuit of it is by no means a proof of materialism or sensuality. Wealth is merely a symbol for the power into which it is convertible, and for the sake of which it is desired. The fact that a man desires it, throws little or no light upon the real object of his ambition. He may want it to pamper his stomach, to build a fine house, to further his political ambition, or to carry on a social settlement. Of these, however they may differ in ethical value, the first alone is a material or sensual aim. The rest are social and look to the minds of others for their success. As regards mere sensualism, it would seem that it does not play and never has played any very important part as an object of ambition. It does

not appeal to that social imagination which is the basis of all ambition. Men may become sensualists after they achieve wealth—though that is usually left for the heirs—but sensual pleasure was not the object for which they strove. They sought wealth in order to have power, and the respect and admiration which power commands, or, as I think is usually the case, simply because they needed to strive for something and this was the object that most readily presented itself. They sought what they found others seeking, just to be in the game. The more ambition one has, even of the more selfish sorts, the less he is likely to fall into sensuality.

It may seem to some that this assertion that ambition is essentially social, and that its object is the production of some desired effect upon the minds of others, is contradicted by the fact that rich and successful men often display a great contempt for what others think, and openly "trample upon the moral sentiment of the people." I think, however, that a close scrutiny of the facts will show that this supposed contempt of public opinion seldom or never exists. If it does exist it is simply because the person in question looks for the gratification of his ambition to the minds of some small group, his rivals and associates in business, perhaps, whose sentiment differs from that of the public in general. The truth, in most cases, is that the opinion or moral sentiment disregarded is that of only a small part—though very possibly the best part—of the community. It is disregarded largely because attention is fixed upon the majority, who are indifferent to the actions repro-

bated and are ready to admire wealth and power however obtained. In seeking these things our rich men, our plutocrats if you will, are simply conforming to the reigning conception of what constitutes success.

Because it is a symbol convertible into any one of many forms of power, wealth must always be a main object of endeavor, and its attainment will perhaps remain for a majority of persons, the accepted standard of success. There seems to be a truth, however, in the idea that it plays a larger part than it should at the present time, larger, perhaps, than it has ordinarily played in the past. The kinds of power which wealth assures are after all the lower kinds. It will buy material commodities, mechanical service, and plenty of a certain sort of admiration. But the finer, stronger and more generous spirits among men are not, as a rule, to be satisfied with these; they crave something more ideal, more enduring, more personal, some higher place in the minds of those with whom they sympathize, something that, as I said above, appeals more to the social imagination. Ambitions of this higher sort are to be gratified by creative work in literature or art, by heroic deeds upon the field of battle or elsewhere, by eloquence in any noble cause, by the sort of philanthropy that involves personal service, and so on.)

As compared with these finer ambitions the pursuit of wealth now absorbs more of the endeavor of the higher class of minds than has commonly been the case in the past. The dazzling succession of inventions and the sequent material progress have had a semi-hypnotic

effect in turning the attention of men in this one direction and in shutting it off from others. The work at hand has been material work, chiefly the development of new means of production. Men have taken it up, and with the emulation inseparable from human energy have striven with one another to excel in it and to gain the power and honor that goes with success. But in such work, more than in others, the accumulation of wealth is the proof and symbol of success, and this, accordingly, has more and more become the accepted standard, even for a sort of minds that in another state of things would have risen above it. A standard or type of success, set-a-going in this way, tends strongly to perpetuate itself. It becomes established in the habit of thought, in public sentiment, tradition and education, while other standards or types are neglected. Children are brought up in it, it is in the air; this comes to seem real and solid while other ideals are looked upon as vague and visionary. A few hundred years ago it seemed the most natural thing in the world to the ambitious among our ancestors, to sell off their property, raise a company and set off to the Holy Land to rescue it from the infidels. This is incomprehensible to us, but we see nothing strange in a man of ambition and imagination devoting a lifetime of strenuous endeavor to the making of tubs or the organized slaughter of hogs. One of these aims is no more strange than the other; both are natural and human, and the men who will do the one thing in one age are very probably the same who would do the other in another age.

We must, then, conclude that the standard of success which our age presses most strongly upon our attention is a narrow and, in some sense, a low one. It needs to be raised and diversified. The standard of success should be the symmetrical reflection of all the needs of human nature, not the exaggerated image of a few of them. Without expecting that wealth will cease to be an object of pretty general esteem and endeavor, we may hope and strive to break down the ascendancy which it exercises over a class of persons who would serve the world better and find more happiness for themselves if they could devote their energies to the discovery of truth, the creation of beauty, or some other of the more imaginative aims. It may be asked, what is to hinder? The answer, however, is not difficult: to undertake careers of this sort in the face of the indifference to them which for the most part prevails, requires a self-confidence and vigor of initiative which is rare; the special education necessary is often unattainable; the chance of making a living is not encouraging; and, most fatal of all by far, the state of public sentiment denies to the follower of art, for example, that appreciative sympathy which is essential to the unfolding of talent. (The present age acts upon a large class of minds of the finer order as an uncongenial climate acts upon a plant: it chills them and stunts their growth: they feel home-sick.) And, aside from these, people in general would be much the better for the broader and richer life which a widening of the field of endeavor would bring with it.

To attempt to point out in detail just how this raising and diversification of the standard is to be effected would carry us too far from our special topic: it would simply lead out to a general discussion of social tendencies and the means of progress. I may say, however, that here, as elsewhere, the method of betterment is a vigorous exercise of individual energy and self-reliance. Each innovating individual, so far as he makes his ideas valid, alters the standard of success, opens new opportunities, does something toward the general upbuilding of the social structure.

It will be apparent, I think, that the view regarding the nature of success here maintained is decidedly a hopeful one so far as concerns the possibility of progress; and wholly opposed to the pessimistic attitude based on the supposed "selfishness" of human nature and inevitable predominance of the economic motive. (The motive that really predominates, now as in the past, is essentially social and moral, it is the desire to be something in the minds of others, to gain respect, honor, social power of some sort. This being the case human endeavor is above all things plastic, controlled by the spirit of the age. The standard of success, and with it the whole character and tendency of competition, is a social or moral phenomenon accessible to human endeavor. Society can and does determine what success is.



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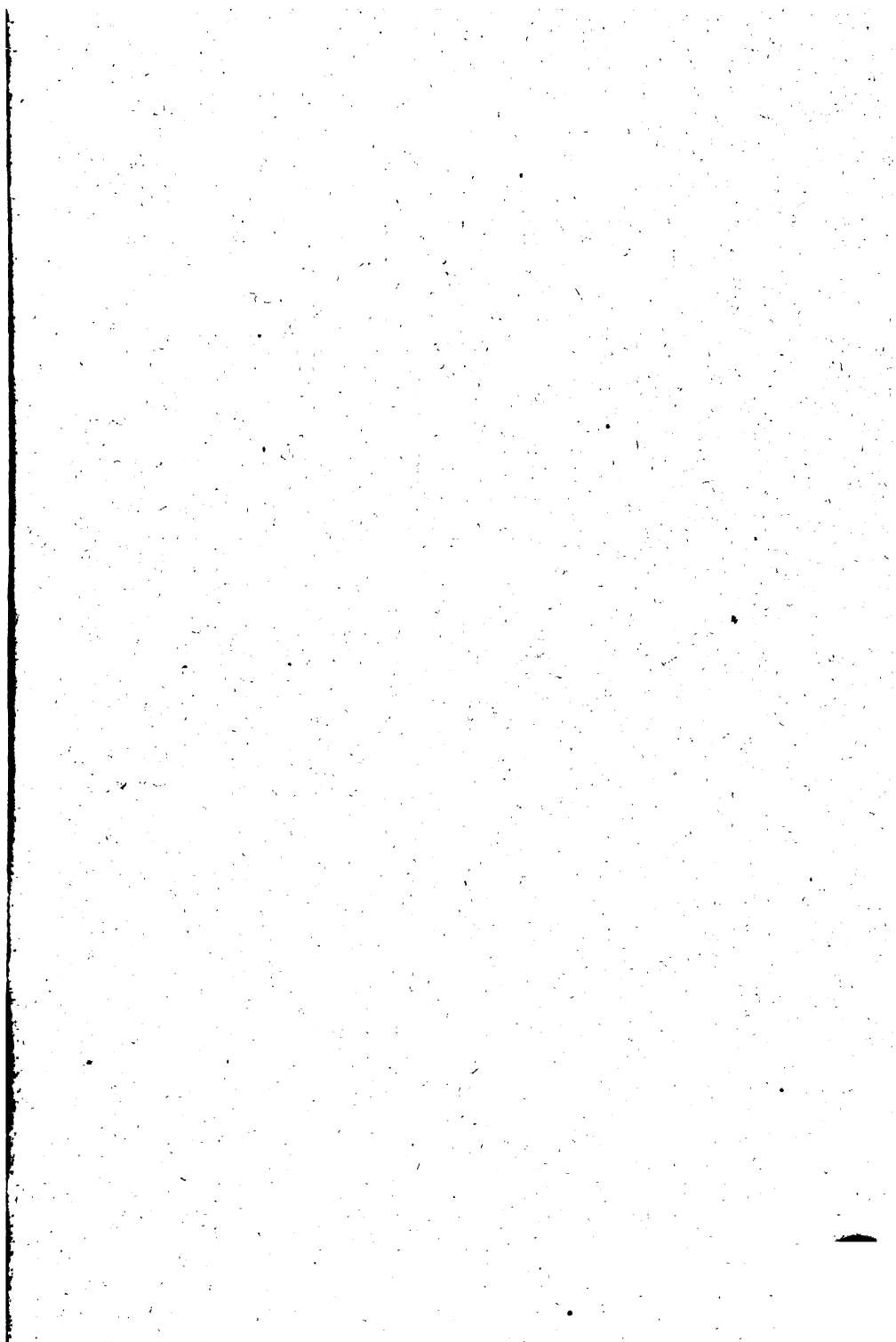
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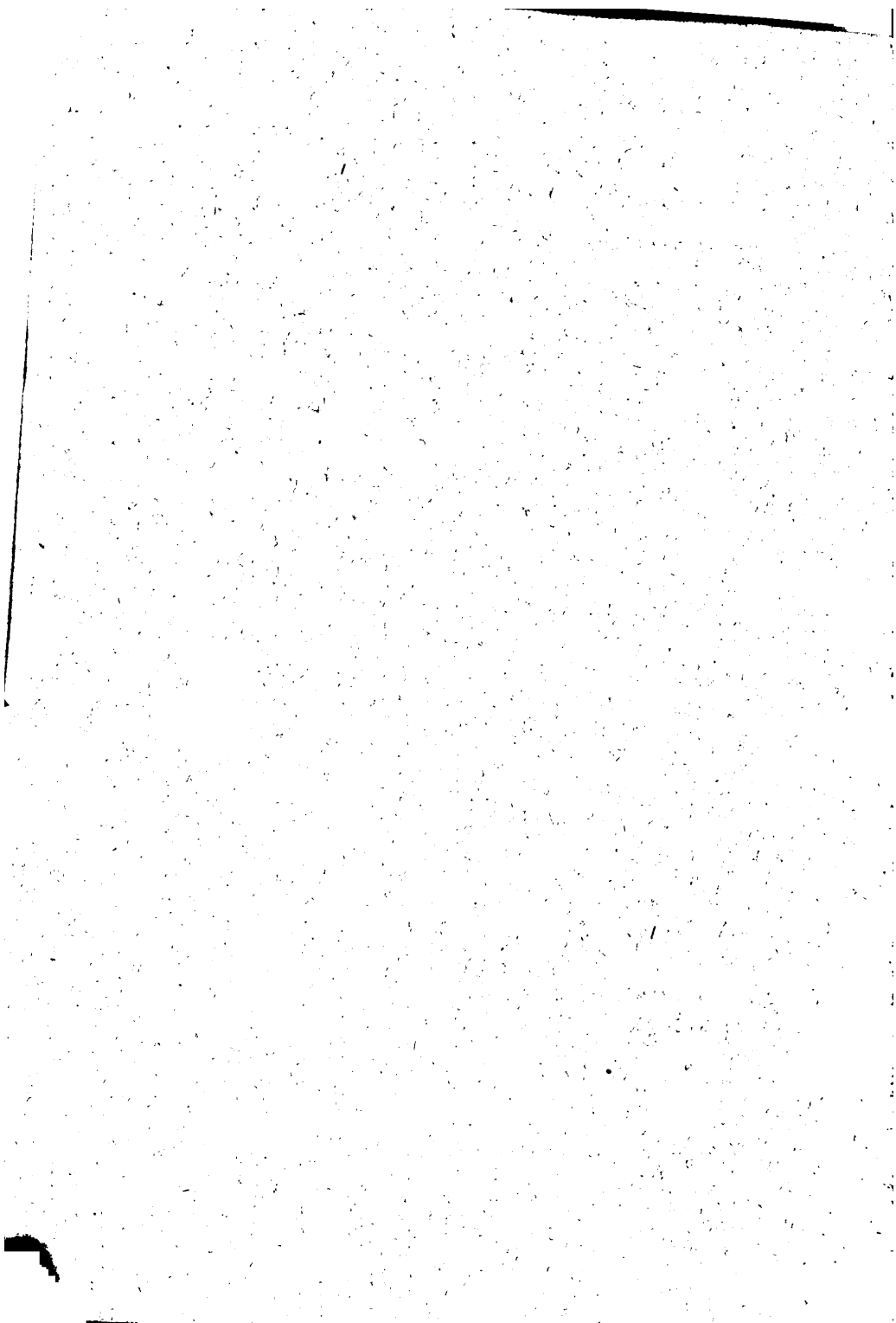
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